Writing in “the midst of an unfolding disaster”:

Ecocritical Perspectives on Contemporary Imaginative Representations of Tasmanian Wilderness

By

Vivienne Condren (Hamilton) BA, B.Litt (Hons), MA

Figure 1 Smelterscape by Isla MacGregor (taken Zeehan, Tasmania)

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Vivienne Condren 30th October 2016

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ABSTRACT

This thesis argues that in the midst of an unfolding ecological disaster contemporary Australian authors and filmmakers are eschewing stereotypical Gothic and Romantic depictions of Tasmania's wilderness, and instead, are repositioning the nonhuman—the environment and wildlife—as more threatened than threatening.

Emerging from colonial discourse Tasmania's particular aesthetic heritage developed around a series of double visions involving the representation (or absence) of Aborigines in the landscape. Ian McLean captures this tension in the concept of the "fractured aesthetic," which provides a point of departure for my analysis. I adapt and apply the fractured aesthetic through my ecocritical readings of eight contemporary fictional texts, all set in the Tasmanian wilderness. In contrast to McLean I focus on the representation (or absence) of anthropogenic degradation, resulting from exploitation of the island's natural resources. Ultimately, representations of human/nonhuman kinship, rather than intra-human relationships of power direct my textual analysis. To this end, and drawing on the work of Lawrence Buell, Kate Rigby, Serenella Iovino, Greg Garrard, Richard Kerridge, Emily Potter, and other leading scholars of ecocriticism, I synthesise posthumanist ideas of shared materiality that engage recent theories of kinship, entanglement, nonhuman agency, affective narration and ideas of hope through environmental prophecy.

Tasmania's rich literary and environmental history is apparent in the body of work analysed. The selected texts are: *The Tale of Ruby Rose* (1987), a film directed by Roger Scholes; *Death of a River Guide* (1994) and *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* (1997), both written by Richard Flanagan; *The Hunter* (1999) novel by Julia Leigh and the film adaptation, *The Hunter* (2011), directed by Daniel Nettheim; *The World Beneath* (2009), by Cate Kennedy; *The River Wife* (2009), by Heather Rose and *The Blue Cathedral* (2011) by Cameron Hindrum. Ecocriticism of these novels and films remains scarce and I address this gap by exploring ways

in which these texts represent nonhuman agency while also acknowledging the sense of shared materiality at the core of human/nonhuman kinship.

After a contextual discussion of wilderness ideology generally, and Tasmanian wilderness representation particularly, I explore the lingering "Tasmanian Gothic" aesthetic which depicts the environment as threatening, as enemy and/or "monster." The textual analysis demonstrates a shift in consciousness apparent in residual Romantic aesthetics, reworked to include ecocritical perspectives on the sublime and nonhuman agency. Genre is examined, through the power of fairy tale and magic realism, to represent unfolding environmental disasters, and also through satire, to represent the ethical ambiguities of "showcasing" wilderness. In addition, I explore how co-presence between human and nonhuman communities can become toxic co-dependence. The ethical implications of dystopian and/or more optimistic representations of extinction, loss of biodiversity and environmental degradation generally are at the centre of my analysis. The final main chapter returns to the Gothic theme but this time I give a contemporary ecoGothic reading which recasts the monster as the human threat to fragile wilderness ecosystems.

Underpinning this thesis is the idea that literature and film play a crucial role in shaping society's ethical response to environmental crises. These narratives, I argue, need to be read ecocritically to reveal new paradigms of thought that constitute environmental advocacy. I further argue that writers' and filmmakers' representations of Tasmanian wilderness offer opportunities for reflection that exceed local interests and national mythology. They function as a regional lens into understanding ecological and cultural tensions and ambiguities of global relevance.

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Vivienne Condren

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Figure 2 'The Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area.' Parks and Wildlife Service Tasmania website. Accessed 3rd April, 2013 Image copyright: http://desertgirl2010.wordpress.com/tag/wilderness-world-heritage-area/

Abbreviations and Primary Texts

Ruby Rose	*The Tale of Ruby Rose* (film by Roger Scholes 1987)
River Guide	*Death of a River Guide* (novel by Richard Flanagan 1994)
One Hand Clapping	*The Sound of One Hand Clapping* (novel by Richard Flanagan 1997)
The Hunter	*The Hunter* (novel by Julia Leigh 1999 and film by Daniel Nettheim 2011)
The World Beneath	*The World Beneath* (novel by Cate Kennedy 2009)
The River Wife	*The River Wife* (novel by Heather Rose 2009)
The Blue Cathedral	*The Blue Cathedral* (novel by Cameron Hindrum 2011)
FRB	Franklin River Blockade
TWS	Tasmanian Wilderness Society
HEC	Hydro Electric Commission

"In the age of ecological crisis, literature can choose to be 'ethically charged', and to communicate an idea of responsibility. In the age of ecological crisis, this responsibility is global. And what is endangered is not only 'nature' in general but local natures in particular" (Iovino 31)

INTRODUCTION

This thesis forms part of a conversation within environmental humanities which re-imagines, and challenges, the position of the human within the natural world. It combines literary criticism with environmental history, ecology and issues of eco-justice to offer a deeper understanding of the relationship between human and nonhuman nature.

Tasmanian wilderness and its representation in prose fiction and film are the focus of this work. I argue that in the midst of an unfolding ecological disaster contemporary Australian authors and filmmakers are eschewing stereotypical Gothic and Romantic depictions of Tasmania's wilderness, and instead, repositioning the nonhuman—the environment and wildlife—as more threatened than threatening.

The island state of Australia, Tasmania, is one of the few places remaining on Earth where ancient ecosystems still flourish, and in this sense the environment and the community serve as a litmus test (both locally and globally) for environmental attitudes. Tasmania's wilderness has featured in global media headlines often because of confrontations between forestry industries and conservationists. The island has proved a vast natural resource for human exploitation (even before colonisation) and this history informs current environmental and literary discourse explicitly and implicitly.

Writers' and filmmakers' representations of Tasmanian wilderness offer opportunities for reflections that exceed local interests and national myths. They "address the large, cosmic questions of existence but they do so within a context of shore-bound particularity" (Hay 555). These representations, I argue, can serve as an intensification of experience, both culturally and ecologically, with the resulting "heightened space" creating a moral laboratory "for the negotiation of self and world" (Marland 862). They function as a regional lens into understanding ecological and cultural tensions and ambiguities that are of global relevance.

The title of this thesis and the approach taken are inspired by ecocritic Kate Rigby's concerns about "writing in the midst of an unfolding disaster" ("Anthropocene" 8). The "unfolding disaster" to which Rigby refers is the environmental impact of the anthropocene, an informal geologic era based on the impact of the human on the rest of the planet. The era's exact chronological beginning is contested but some scientists date the anthropocene from the Industrial Revolution (which coincides with the time of literary Romanticism). In turn this timeframe provides a significant point of departure for literary analysis. In accord with Rigby's work, the dual focus of my project encompasses both the ethics and aesthetics of imaginative representation. Works of fiction have potential to inspire ecological sensibilities and engender new paradigms of thought, necessary in a rapidly changing, increasingly fragile natural world. By imaginatively testing scenarios, ideas, emotions and outcomes readers can discover and develop their own ethical positions.

Narratives about unfolding natural disasters are frequently framed through dystopian and utopian scenarios involving representations of loss and/or hope. In various ways the Tasmanian texts examined in this thesis represent loss of human kinship with the nonhuman world and loss of environmental health, at times, with little consolation beyond a pleasurable aesthetic experience. Within these often sobering narratives, however, are moments of, and potential for, restoring a sense of shared material connection between human and nonhuman species. Within this context literature and film may facilitate shifts in environmental consciousness and become environmental advocacy.

I analyse six novels and two films from the point-of-view of their effectiveness as environmental advocacy. In accord with Catherine Belsey, I argue that fiction "has the power to soothe, persuade, and also to challenge," and that it has the potential to engage readers' environmental consciences through the pleasure factors associated with affective narration (127). By countering rationalist constructs of reductive human/nonhuman relationships, based

on active subject and passive object, affective narration "constitutes an environmentalist intervention" (L. A. White 275). Such disruption to conventional hierarchies and binaries, which structure the human as dominant over, and separate from, the rest of nature, allows for a sense of kinship to emerge. Bonds may be intensified as human emotional and sensory exchanges in narratives create feelings of immersion and interdependence with the wilderness environment.

Representations of interdependence between the human and nonhuman world are at the core of my analysis of the eight texts selected. They form a diverse body of work that demonstrates the extensive literary and environmental history of Tasmania. Setting is the key indicator for the primary text selection. Representations of environment in fiction are often relegated to background setting and designed to enhance narrative and character construction, but they can be read differently. In accord with ecocritical theory I bring these nonhuman representations, that is wilderness and its wildlife, to the forefront of critical analysis. As a counterpoint to anthropocentric political approaches in literature and literary criticism I emphasise the broader, more inclusive ethical principles and concerns of ecocentrism (a term used almost synonymously with "deep ecology" by Greg Garrard (*Ecocriticism* 25)). The deep ecology ethic is generally "the explicit or implicit perspective of ecocritics" (*Ecocriticism* 23).

"Deep ecology", a phrase introduced by Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess in 1973, stresses the intrinsic value of all living things regardless of their usefulness to humans. His landmark paper, "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement. A Summary," differentiates between "shallow" and "deep" ecological sensibilities (95). According to Naess modern environmentalism, which focuses on pollution and resource depletion and their subsequent impact on human health and living standards, is comparatively "shallow". The "deep ecology movement", on the other hand, emphasises the health of the biosphere, relational interdependences and the intrinsic value of all life forms regardless of their value to humans.

However, these principles underpinning modern ecocentric ethics, which extends moral consideration to nonhumans, were developing before Naess' landmark paper. In America, Aldo Leopold, a professional forester/ecologist, argued that we need to understand our land as our community rather than as our commodity (xviii). By the 1930s he "was America's leading wilderness campaigner" (Hay, *Main Currents* 15). In *A Sand County Almanac* (1949) Leopold argues that ethical change requires internal change and he advocates for a simpler life with less emphasis on economic health and consumerism (246, xvii–xix). [1] He demonstrates that wilderness can provide a "laboratory for the study of land health" and that it also serves as a benchmark from which to judge land sickness (274–275). Leopold was the first to extend ethical consideration to the natural world yet by the 1960s his "land ethic" had faded into the background (Hay. *Main Currents* 10). It was well into the 1970s before his work was "rediscovered" "by an action-focused movement belatedly seeking a theory" (Hay, *Main Currents,* 10).[2] Leopold's foundational principles are reflected in Naess' concept of "deep

[1] *A Sand County Almanac* also includes a collection of essays under the heading 'The Upshot'. 'The Land Ethic' (pp 237–264) argues for individuals taking responsibility for the health of the land through conservation (Leopold judges land health by its capacity for self-renewal) (258).

[2] Hay suggests most current environmentalism is future-focussed "with only some of its thinkers and even fewer of its activists evincing much interest in the past." He explains a discontinuity within the modern environmental movement, that is, the earlier "ecological conscience" advocating for wilderness preservation by Aldo Leopold and his cohort was overshadowed in the 1960s and much of the 1970s by the emerging focus on population distribution and pollution. The latter concern is encapsulated by Rachel Carson's focus on the

ecology", numerous other eco-philosophers and current ecocentrism generally.[3] Leopold's sense of an ecological community anticipates contemporary ideas of ecological citizenship and theories relating to material ecocriticism discussed in this thesis. In general, and specifically for this thesis, is the ecocentric perspective that the human and nonhuman world are interconnected through a dynamic and shared materiality. Representing this entanglement through imaginative work offers opportunities to renew a sense of kinship with the rest of the natural world.

Nevertheless, as Rigby reminds us, while nature and culture are increasingly perceived as interwoven, and language itself shapes our view of the world, there is also a physical existence "beyond the page" which precedes "human knowledge and power" ("Ecocriticism" 4). While Rigby's comments are fundamental for first wave ecocriticism, my concern is that, as William Major and Andrew McMurray claim, ecocriticism "has become enmeshed in institutional frameworks" and "the original mission to reinstate the referent has been diverted" (qtd. in Marland 859). This thesis seeks to return the focus, of ecocritical analysis, to the referent, that is, the intrinsic value of the nonhuman other. Moreover, discussion on the position of the human within contemporary environmental thought logically precedes consideration of human social and political organisations. To this end I synthesise "fourth wave" aspects of

environmental effects from pesticides and other chemicals in her 1962 publication *Silent Spring* which set the tone for modern environmentalism. (see Hay, *Main Currents* 10, 15-16).

[3] For a list of other philosophers working on ideas of deep ecology see (*Deep Ecology Movement* xviii–xxviii) and also (Hay, *Main Currents* 27).

ecocriticism premised on posthumanist ideas of shared materiality that engage recent theories of kinship, entanglement, nonhuman agency and affective narration (Marland 855–60).[4]

Human and nonhuman agency is represented in the Tasmanian texts through aesthetics which absorb and reflect a brutal colonial history and a plundering of the landscape's natural resources. In these fictional works the physical features of the Tasmanian wilderness imaginatively merge with the island's Indigenous, convict, and free settler migrant population. Representations of contemporary exploitative industries and enterprises and local and international conservation movements add to existing layers of environmental and social history. The fictional Tasmanian wilderness settings are credibly based on two actual regions: The South West and the Central Plateau. The geographical map provided at the beginning of this thesis indicates names and relative locations of the narrative settings. My texts are works of imagination and the places depicted may be composites of fact and fiction. Nevertheless, they are grounded in realism (with a couple of exceptions) and thus their environmental detail demands general accuracy. The regions depicted comprise spectacular wild coastlines, isolated peninsulas, dense rainforests and deep gorges that provide "wilderness experiences" for local and international tourists. Penal colonies, hydro-electric power stations and wood-chip pulp mills have also been well served by these wild natural features.

Most narrative timeframes, in the texts discussed here, post-date the landmark Franklin River Dam protest campaign (1982–83).[5] After such intense national and international media

[4] "The fourth wave should be regarded as co-existent with rather than superseding the third (or indeed the other strands of ecocriticism) and has only very recently been identified. It is the emergent field of *material ecocriticism*" (Marland 855). The perspective I take in this work is not specifically feminist, but rather I focus on the shared material substance or trans-corporeality of the human/nonhuman relationship.

[5] An historical overview of this campaign is provided at the beginning of Chapter Three.

coverage showcasing Tasmania's wilderness, it might be anticipated that local attention and attitudes to the conservation value of the area could change. Especially, when environmental groups claimed victory after the Federal government intervened against the State government to stop the dam construction. Yet, in many cases, the divide between affected Tasmanian communities intensified as the ideals of industrial development and conservationism clashed. While the last thirty years has left many Tasmanians remaining uninterested, for those affected, it has been a crucible of ethical and political dilemmas. Consequently, the South West and the Central Highlands regions, and the thirty years' timeframe, concentrate representations of environmental attitudes, actions, and conflicts and form part of a global network of environmental literature and cinema.

Numerous and divergent environmental perspectives, within the texts, create a range of imaginative opportunities for local and international readers to consider their own ethical positions. Critical response may also play a vital role in teasing out nuanced ethical complexities in these particular imaginative works. Unsurprisingly, given the relatively small number of texts set in Tasmania and the competitive nature of fiction publishing, ecocriticism of all of my selected texts remains scarce or non-existent. By identifying and analysing representations of "unfolding disasters" within the selected texts I address a gap in both scholarly and popular reviews of these works. From the outset, this thesis seeks to encourage further ecocritical debate around the novels and films and Tasmanian literature more generally.

Central to my textual analysis is the understanding that Tasmania's ancient, dynamic, wilderness eludes neat categories and concepts and does not translate into the familiar picturesque, pastoral and sublime aesthetic favoured by European artists and writers. "The success of the picturesque [is] derived from a fine dialectic between culture and nature," yet in Tasmania the wilderness frontiers do not combine successfully with rural scenes of farmyards and labourers in order to naturalise civilisation's progress (McLean 151). Emerging from

colonial discourse Tasmania's particular aesthetic heritage developed around a series of "double visions." While European and Indigenous perspectives constitute one double vision, the tension relevant for this thesis is that which is within and between European representations of the land. Ian McLean developed the concept of a "fractured aesthetic" in response to his reading of Tasmanian colonial artwork, particularly the paintings of John Glover (detailed in Chapter One). McLean's idea captures the tension between, on the one hand, the transcendent ideology of the Oceanic utopia as a social experiment, a moral laboratory, to test Indigenous/coloniser interactions, and on the other hand, the difficulties of incorporating the darker, Gothic aspects of the "uncultivated woods" and "the 'sooty faces' of its inhabitants" (152). A fractured aesthetic encapsulates the challenges inherent in Tasmania's topography and environmental history to represent the landscape through conventional picturesque or sublime aesthetics, Gothic and Romantic tropes and as "pristine wilderness." Visual and textual images can sustain each other and Glover's colonial legacy endures as contemporary writers and filmmakers of Tasmanian texts continue to use techniques which fracture conventional aesthetic codes. The result challenges readers and viewers to respond critically to the way Tasmanian landscapes have been represented as a double vision of classic wilderness space and/or as resources for exploitative industries and enterprises.

While McLean's essay inspired my own notion of a fractured aesthetic my focus is not on the representation of (or absence) of Aborigines in the colonial landscape, but rather the contemporary representation (or absence) of anthropogenic degradation of vulnerable wilderness. The fractured aesthetic is a constitutive element of what I refer to as a "contemporary ecological aesthetic." As the name suggests this concept has an ecological focus that represents the vulnerability of wilderness, especially to human activity. To this end people and signs of human activity (especially ecological and aesthetic damage) are not screened out, as in conventional literary and visual representations of pristine wilderness. While the colonial

fractured aesthetic unsettles ideas of belonging to, and possession of previously Indigenous-occupied land, a contemporary ecological aesthetic encapsulates a dual sense of past and anticipated loss. The past, often represented through nostalgia and melancholy, encompasses loss of wild places, loss of communities both human and nonhuman, while future loss anticipates ongoing decline of the planetary ecological health.

The contemporary ecological aesthetic also allows for shifting concepts of the sublime in nature. Historically, ecocritics have been reluctant to engage literary representations of the sublime because they depend on and reinscribe "the notion of nature's otherness, of the separation between the human and nonhuman realms" (Hitt 603–05). Yet, as Christopher Hitt argues, sublime representations of nature can be read as resisting the final stage, that of human mastery of the landscape. This may be achieved through developing an idea of "nature-as-self," that is, recognition of the shared material connection and interdependence (kinship) between human and nonhuman entities (612). I reinterpret this contemporary concept of the sublime aesthetic to incorporate a "fracture" generated through tensions between pride in human achievement and alarm at the level of human destruction. Discussion of the contemporary ecological aesthetic, the ecological sublime and the toxic sublime is extended in Chapter One and applied throughout the textual analysis.

Understanding and critiquing the dynamics of human triumph over, and destruction of, the Earth's natural resources is an increasingly global concern. Tasmania (approximately the size of Ireland) has endured anthropogenic environmental manipulation and destruction since the first humans arrived, approximately 40,000 years ago. Although shaped by Indigenous peoples over many thousands of years, large tracts of relatively undisturbed wilderness remain. Many of the environmental challenges and vulnerabilities which form part of Tasmania's history and contemporary image have parallels in other parts of the planet. I note though, that there are also limitations, of an overarching narrative's capacity, to represent all patterns of

individual and cultural experience at a global level. By privileging a Western perspective in my selection and analysis of texts, environmental concerns are not always in accord with the basic needs of developing countries (see Deloughrey, Didur and Carrigan 6).

Furthermore, the first Tasmanians, the Aborigines, and their relationship with the land, are rarely represented directly in the contemporary Western stories that I examine. Yet, archaeological and historical evidence indicate Indigenous occupation dating back at least thirty thousand years by three particular Indigenous clans.[6] Human impact puts into question the viability of the concept of "wilderness" itself and I discuss these doubts in Chapter One. In order to address Indigenous "invisibility" and create a balance for particular contexts, I "write-in" Aboriginal occupation of the land at appropriate historical points throughout the textual analysis.

Local environmental effects from exploitative industries and enterprises, and consumerism generally, are highlighted, but representations of human/nonhuman kinship, rather than intra-human relationships of power, are my main thematic focus. I position humans as part of the natural world and I adopt an ecocentric approach by considering the intrinsic value of the environment and all species. Thus, in Chapter Six, (where human health and well-being are emphasised) I consider narrative representations of the needs and environmental impacts of a particular species, *Homo sapiens*, within the planetary ecological system. In much the same way in Chapter Seven, I examine the complexities of anthropogenic extinction through representations of endangered species, in this case *Thylacinus cynocephalus*, the Tasmanian thylacine.

[6] "At least thirty thousand years" is evidenced by the archaeological remains found in the Kuti Kina and Deena Reena caves in the Franklin River areas in 1981 (Ryan 316–17).

Underpinning this thesis is the idea that literature plays a crucial role in the formation of "the moral conscience of a society" (Iovino 49). That which Rigby and others characterise as the "unfolding disaster" of anthropocentric ecocide demands a transformation in consciousness, social arrangement, and human/nonhuman relationships.[7] New ways of responding to literature have a role in this transformation. Serenella Iovino explains the value of contemporary local narratives (which portray human relationships with the environment) as stimulus for cultural change: "It is this very connection (typical of ecocriticism) between the singularity of the narratives and the universality of their normative content that enables us to speak of local natures and global responsibilities" (43). Local stories that offer ethical guidelines for our interdependent human/nonhuman relationship create new mythologies. The concept of mythology, in this thesis, accords with Ernst Cassirer's approach which regards mythological "truth" as "re-creating and so realizing itself" through a process of intellectual synthesis based on "*different* entities" that retain resonances and affinities which extend beyond specific timeframes and cultures (6, 61). Consequently, my interpretation of mythology is not derived from Roland Barthes' structuralist approach that relies on semiology to reveal ideologies which naturalise bourgeois power (111–116; 148–150). Rather, the new mythologies embedded in the selected texts, are fictional narratives but they are constructed from local historical and ecological realities (entities). Such commitment to representing local environments also provides opportunities to engage with the material reality of the referent.

[7] Rigby defines "ecocide" as "a veritable holocaust of life on Earth, the sixth mass extinction event that our planet has so far experienced and, most significantly from an ethical perspective, the first to be brought about by a single species whose members are capable of understanding what they are doing and of making a moral choice to act otherwise" ("Imagining Catastrophe" 66-67).

The narratives analysed in this thesis, I argue, form part of Tasmania's contemporary mythology of kinship and/or alienation between human and nonhuman species that resonates with many global eco-cultural tensions.

Reading Ecocritically in The Twenty-First Century

Pete[r] Hay sets the tone for ecocritical discourse when he states that, "Biodiversity may be in decline, but diversity of ecological thought is not" (*Main Currents*, 344). Lawrence Buell refers to his own landmark publication *The Future of Environmental Criticism* (2005) as "an interim statement" in a fast expanding world (*Future* vii). As recently as 2011 Buell maintained his view that "ecocriticism remains more in a state of unfolding than of consolidation" (Buell, Heise, and Thornber 433). In order to capture the rhizomatic growth of ecocritical ideas and theory Buell prefers the metaphor "palimpsest" rather than "wave": "Most currents set in motion by early ecocriticism continue to run strong, and most forms of second-wave revisionism involve building on as well as quarrelling with precursors" (*Future* 17). This notion of writing, erasing, rewriting and continually revisiting ideas and theories is apt when we consider pioneering work of Thoreau, Leopold, Naess and deep ecologists generally because they offer such resonance for twenty-first century ecocriticism. While Thoreau was writing *Walden*, across the Atlantic the Romantics, in Britain and Europe, were also focussing on human relationships with nature. The Romantic legacy for contemporary ecocritical aesthetics and ethics remains significant, both in terms of how to enjoy and care for nature, but also through the implications of the unconscious anthropocentrism frequently underpinning their individualism and spiritual bonding with the environment. The Romantic aesthetic continues to underpin many representations of Tasmanian wilderness and can result in problematic fractures for contemporary ecological ethics.

Pioneers and The Romantic Legacy

Emerging ecocritical sensibilities in the work of Leopold, Naess and the deep ecology movement generally have been noted in the Introduction. Nearly a century before Leopold, however, Henry David Thoreau, a natural historian and a pioneer ecologist embarked on an experiment to live two years in a self-built cabin in the woods. It was located a mile from his nearest neighbor, on the shore of Walden Pond, in Concord, Massachusetts. Hay considers Thoreau to be "the closest of the nineteenth century thinkers to present-day environmentalism" (*Main Currents* 9). Thoreau's example of living simply, self-sufficiently and sustainably, recorded in his publication *Walden,* is a crucial guide to present day practical environmentalism and continues to resonate with twenty-first century ecocriticism (McKibben, *Walden* viii).

Walden (1854), like *Leopold's A Sand County Almanac* (1949), is a keenly observed ecological description of habitat. Thoreau's poetic images of the ponds' colours as their waters reflect sky and seasonal changes are highly evocative (*Walden* 167). For Thoreau "A lake is the landscape's most beautiful and expressive feature. It is the earth's eye;" and the distant foreshore on a warm hazy afternoon "looks like a thread of finest gossamer stretched across the valley" (*Walden* 176). Thoreau's (and later, Leopold's) aesthetic blend of observation with imagination and emotion parallel Carson's landmark blend of fact and fiction in *Silent Spring* and also twenty-first century affective narration (discussed later). Max Oelschlaeger suggests "*Walden* perhaps rivals Plato's Dialogues in embodying philosophy as an art form" and he claims Thoreau resists Emerson's position as "disembodied transcendental spectator" (170). Instead of abstract nature Thoreau's writing in *Walden* directly engages the referent, that is, the specific and concrete locale of Walden Pond and his own lived experience there. He writes about the disturbance created by the Fitchburg Railroad system as if it is another of the sounds and sights of the rest of the natural world: "The whistle of the locomotive penetrates my woods summer and winter, sounding like the scream of a hawk sailing over some farmer's yard" (109).

"Thoreau situated himself *within* nature" and intuitively recognizes the yet to be scientifically discovered corporeal connections between humans and the rest of the natural world (Sanders 189). This understanding is reflected in the concluding pages of *Walden* when Thoreau evocatively (and ecologically) suggests: "The life in us is like the water in the river" (*Walden* 311).[8]

In many ways, though, Thoreau was an "unconscious environmentalist" who, despite living at the onset of the industrial age, knew nothing about smog, anthropogenic climate change and mass extinctions (McKibben, *Walden* xiii). Yet he recognizes the pressures of "modern" living in his own nineteenth-century society believing: "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation" (*Walden* 6). Thoreau's example of living simply and sustainably with nature is echoed by aspects of contemporary ecocentrism, but there is a significant difference. Thoreau's main impulse is not to preserve biodiversity, or to advocate for the intrinsic value of the nonhuman but rather to preserve nature as a means of spiritual salvation and pleasure for humans and in this sense he has much in common with the Romantics.

Romanticism was not a homogenous literary movement but rather it was an aesthetic expression of various types of human relationships with nature. The Movement and the literature itself were often characterised by contradiction and ambivalence. There is not the space in this work to unpack a history of Romanticism or to consider in depth any of the major

[8] In *The River Wife*, the protagonist, the river wife (who is part human and part fish) is never just a woman or just a fish, but rather she is the river also. Her mutable form captures the ancestral connections which Edward O. Wilson explains as the genetic unity of life (*Future of Life* 131).

writers of the period. Consequently, I limit my discussion to a few salient points that have particular relevance for contemporary ecocriticism.

Romanticism was initially an aesthetic response which sought to balance, or even counter, the rationalism of the Enlightenment by recognising and valuing the imagination and the expression of strong emotion. Within this literary shift, which coincided with the Industrial Revolution, there also occurred a dramatic change in attitudes to nature and wilderness. Mountains and forests began to be perceived as beautiful and as places for recreation and spiritual renewal. Feelings of awe towards nature's wild beauty, introduced what became known as the sublime element into literature, and the arts generally.[9]

Perhaps the major difficulty ecocritics have with the Romantic aesthetic is its primarily anthropocentric focus. While nature generally and wilderness specifically are valued, and a desire for a sense of oneness with the natural world is a primary impulse for the Romantic poets they are, to varying degrees, motivated by self-improvement. This may be to fulfil spiritual needs, the development of humility and frugality for example; for character building, the skills and endurance required for extended hiking; for physical fitness; or for the recreational/mood enhancing enjoyment of beautiful scenery. Despite a new respect and appreciation of wilderness, generally nature's preservation was determined by how it could serve humans rather than for its own intrinsic value. Moreover, despite the Industrial Revolution, "Romantic nature is never seriously endangered" as it is now by consumerism and climate change (Garrard, *Ecocriticism* 48). As Garrard points out, however, there is a discernable shift: "a Romantic

[9] The Gothic aesthetic, a sub-genre of Romanticism, is discussed in Chapter Two. Different aesthetic representations of the sublime are discussed throughout the thesis especially in "There is no Wilderness," *Ruby Rose, World Beneath* and the film analysis of *The Hunter*. See pages 9, 65–66 (including footnote 20), 165, 170 and 256.

proto-ecological writing" evident "in an unprecedented insistence on *a kind of* [my italics] intrinsic value in nature, a worth not reducible to an instrumental calculus of resource base or agricultural potential" (*Romantics'*, 1–2).

There are moments of contemporary ecological sensibilities within the Romantic aesthetic which continue to inform ecocriticism and Stuart Cooke suggests we "cherish art for what it can give us, rather than concentrate on what it cannot" (4). He commends Rigby's *Topographies of the Sacred* which emphasises connections between eighteenth and nineteenth-century Romanticism and recent trends in deep ecological thinking (1). Critics are often ambivalent regarding the ecocritical value of the Romantic poets. While acknowledging William Wordsworth's attitude to nature evolved into "a more ecological view," Hay notes the pastoral elements and insists the idealised past in Wordsworth's work "is more garden-like than wild" (*Main Currents*, 6). John Danby argues that in the complexities of poems like "The Solitary Reaper" Wordsworth extends beyond his self-described mental attitude of "wise passiveness" into a deeper communion with nature, one "in which both 'nature' and 'humanity' are thought of as one" not because they are but because "both are related to a fuller context" (49).[10] I suggest this "fuller context" could be interpreted as a contemporary sense of ecological community. Wordsworth's spontaneous feeling tempered by quiet reflection is apparent in a developing empathy with nature and can be read as a precursor for a contemporary ecological conscience.

Jonathan Bate's ecocritical reading of John Keats' "To Autumn" is intellectually exciting in its demonstration of the potential for reinterpreting Romantic poetry. Bate explains

[10] Wordsworth's "wise-passiveness" is a meditative state encapsulated by the following lines in "Tintern Abbey": "While with an eye made quiet by the power/ Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,/ We see into the life of things." (ll 47–49). (Bloom & Trilling 147).

that while there is movement from culture to nature (that is, a cottage-garden to meadows and wild woods) he points out that Keats resists conventional binaries that separate human artefacts from nature (‘“To Autumn” as Ecosystem” 261). Bate argues for Keats’ “intuitive understanding of the underlying law of community ecology, namely that biodiversity is the key to the survival and adaptation of ecosystems” (‘“To Autumn” as Ecosystem” 258). If we consider the last stanza of “To Autumn” the rhapsodic celebration of nature is not confined to traditional pastoral tropes of lambs frolicking in fields and robins singing in a domestic garden, rather it is an evocation of the entirety of life including the seasons, the skies and the insects. In this sense, Bate points out the movement through “To Autumn” is a synthesizing one which evokes contemporary notions of thinking globally and acting locally (‘“To Autumn” as Ecosystem” 261). The poem ends with a crescendo of bleats, whistles, twitters, a mournful choir of gnats and the soft treble of hedge-crickets merging into an eco–symphony.

While an ecological impulse is apparent in some of Wordsworth’s and Keats’ poetry, many ecocritics turn to John Clare for sustained examples of an emerging ecocentric sensibility within the Romantic movement. In contrast to most of the Romantic poets, Clare was raised in poverty, mostly self-educated and earned his living directly from the land as a farm labourer. Raymond Williams argues that “Clare marks the end of pastoral poetry, in the very shock of its collision with actual country experience” (57). Garrard suggests Clare, “on occasion gives nature a voice of its own” (see the narration in “The Lament of Swordy Well”)” and notes “Clare’s sympathy [with nature], most often expressed towards threatened trees, vulnerable birds’ nests and wild flowers among the arable crops” (‘Romantics’ 121). Clare was devastated by the impact of the enclosures not just on humans but on nonhumans also. “The unbroken continuity” of open fields was replaced by stone walls and hedgerows and the resulting quaint patchwork of landscape is, ironically what is “valued and defended as ‘timeless’ and ‘traditional’ in England today” (Garrard, “Romantics” 122). In “The Moors” Clare denotes a

sense of agency and expresses an ecological ethic of care towards the nonhuman. In the opening lines, "Far spread the moorey ground a level scene/ Bespread with rush and one eternal green/ That never felt the rage of blundering plough" the openness of the original landscape, before the enclosures, is contrasted with the human impact of profit-driven agriculture (lines 1–3). Later, Clare encapsulates the violence to the land through an image of human/nonhuman entanglement: "And sky bound mores in mangled garbs are left/ Like mighty giants of their limbs bereft" (lines 45–46). This powerful image, of the destruction of the hedgerows, denotes an agency to the moors in that they can suffer a sense of loss. Furthermore, by attributing "garbs" and "limbs" to the moors the image also achieves a sense of corporeal integration between humans and nonhuman. Similarly, as I show in the textual analysis, Flanagan integrates human and nonhuman suffering through images of war in *The Sound of One Hand Clapping*.

For ecocriticism the legacy of Romanticism is complex and far-reaching. Eco-progressive writers are aware of the ethical implications of representing the environment as primarily a commodity for human use. Yet, if human health and wellbeing can be enhanced by enjoyment of nature, of itself, this is not problematic. The difficulties emanate from the historical patterns of human conquest and subsequent degradation of the environment. Contemporary ecological aesthetics reinforce a protective community-focussed ethic that sees all living things as having a right to flourish. The early ecological impulses of poets like Wordsworth, Keats and Clare have evolved into deeper contemporary ecological aesthetic and ethical representations. The latter, I argue, sometimes combined with a residual conventional Romantic aesthetic may create a pleasing synthesis or an awkward tension.

Glotfelty defines ecocriticism as a movement among literary scholars in the early 1990s, born of an awareness of environmental crisis and a desire to be part of the solution" (ix). In a summary of the "accelerated rhizomatic spread" of the field into the twenty-first century she suggests its growth "parallels the rising awareness of 'the end of nature'" (ix, xi). This is

reinforced by Bill McKibben (1990) who argues that we have already "stepped over the threshold of … change: that we are at the end of nature" (*End of Nature,* 7). He is not only referring to our *ideas* about nature but also identifies "definite changes in the reality around us —changes that scientists can measure and enumerate" (*End of Nature,* 7). As the damaging impact of the Anthropocene on the environment becomes apparent, the end of "the wild" seems a real possibility for the Earth.

Timothy Morton takes a different approach when he argues for an ecology "without nature" by insisting that perceptions of the natural world are based on fashionable aesthetics and therefore can be misleading and at times eco-regressive. Morton argues that ideologies about nature can be genuinely inhibiting in terms of developing ecological ethics and art (*Ecology* 14). He explains how "different images of the environment suit different kinds of society" and how nature can be both object (it) and subject (us) and also can be conceptualised in terms of substance [corporeal] and essence [symbolic] (*Ecology* 17–18). Ultimately, (and with some irony) Morton challenges the "distance" he believes is perpetuated by deep ecology and he advocates for "a really deep ecology" which erodes the separation between nature and human by letting go of *ideas* of nature (*Ecology* 197–205). In the context of literary aesthetics Morton makes some interesting observations about *Walden* and also Leopold's "(non) aesthetic" *Almanac* (*Ecology* 31). Morton compares the latter with "the avant-garde strategy of a minimalist painter who puts an empty frame in an art gallery" (*Ecology* 31). My emphasis in this thesis is on the "real-world corporeality of nature" seeing evidence of the referent in Tasmania's enduring tracts of wilderness which have not yet been reduced to a "sub-set of culture" (Hay, *Main Currents* 22).

Within this fluid context of environmental thought I align myself with British ecocritic Richard Kerridge, who believes "the fundamental task for ecocritics is to evaluate texts from the viewpoint of environmental concern, and by doing so introduce environmental criteria into

general cultural debate" (361). Kerridge emphasises the hope of ecocritics "to reach beyond their specialist academic audiences" by encouraging readers and writers to "care" about and respond to "urgent environmental crisis" (363).

Buell, Ursula K. Heise, and Karen Thornber, provides this thesis with specific theoretical points of departure. In their article "Literature and Environment," they make eight critical recommendations for the future of ecocriticism. The main work of this thesis focuses on four of their suggestions. They recommend overshadowing Romantic representations of local place-attachment and national boundaries, by placing more emphasis "on analysis of affinities across cultures and planetary-scale tendencies" (Buell, Heise and Thornber 434). I address this point when I argue that representations of Tasmania's wilderness serve as a microcosm and "moral laboratory" for understanding global perspectives. They also ask that ecocritics continue: "to compensate for initial overemphasis on 'realistic' genres by increasing focus on fiction and more experimental forms of writing" (434–35). I follow this recommendation by selecting fictional narratives, including magic realism and fairy-tale genres, rather than traditional non-fiction texts. They encourage ecocritics "to remain responsive to the changing face of environmentalism: to confront more seriously … the implications of … climate change issues as well as unforeseen future crises" (434–35). I offer retrospective and speculative perspectives through analysing representations of climate change, extraction industries' environmental and social impact, and ecotourism. Finally, I pay particular attention to their eighth recommendation to balance predominating declensionist narratives in environmentalist thought and literature by more optimistic story templates which offer hope for the future (435). I examine the underlying themes and also the conclusions of the primary texts with a view to apocalyptic or more optimistic readings. To this end I explore theories of affective narration and the concept of "prophetic imagination" as a means of delivering hope through changing behaviours and attitudes.

My particular ecocritical reading strategies are informed by theory and discourse which explore the role of imaginative literature and film to represent a sense of human/nonhuman kinship, within a global context of unfolding environmental disaster. Central to the thematic analysis of the texts is work by other international ecocritics: Greg Garrard, Richard Kerridge, Timothy Clark, Serenella Iovino, and Pippa Marland. Recent research by Catherine Belsey, Kate Rigby and Emily Potter underpins my discussion of fiction generally, and affective narration as environmental advocacy, particularly. Ecological aspects are informed primarily by American biologist Edward O. Wilson, Australian environmental historian Bill Gammage, Australian anthropologist and environmental philosopher Deborah Bird Rose and Australian historian Lyndall Ryan.

"Environmentalism is a set of cultural and political responses to a crisis in humans' relationships with their surroundings. Those responses could be scientific, activist or artistic, or a mixture of all three" (Morton, *Ecology* 9). Literature and the arts generally, technology, science or government policies, while not the overall catalysts for change, can serve as "instruments" to recreate a more sustainable planet. But first, humanity needs to be aware of the unfolding problems associated with consumerist-driven climate change and anthropogenic impact on the Earth generally. The strengthening Green vote alone suggests growing recognition that humans are part of an overall ecological system and that our current unsustainable domination requires collective ethical change.[11] Furthermore, shifting concepts of rights and harm, for nonhumans, is the subject of recent research into eco-justice and green crime by sociologists Rob White and Diane Heckenberg, and these ideas inform my textual analysis. Ultimately, I explore, and at times extend, literary, historical and ecological insights from all these noted scholars (and numerous others) by developing and synthesising thematic connections, and by demonstrating the global relevance of local environmental representations

[11] See Lohrey generally and page 52 for specific statistics.

in fiction. The following review of relevant literature is structured around five main themes: fiction as environmental advocacy; environmental prophecy and hope; shared materiality/entanglement/kinship; affective narration; and local natures and global responsibilities.

Fiction as Environmental Advocacy

Fiction, in literature and film, can be effective environmental advocacy, encouraging people to care about their local ecology and the health of the planet. Joseph W Meeker understood the value of connecting literature with ecology in *The Comedy of Survival* (1972), recognised now as a pioneer work in ecocriticism. Meeker also noted the need for interdisciplinary scholarship in understanding the relationship between humans and nonhumans. He argues that "Literature, like science, has as often contributed to the destruction or degradation of biological environments as to their greater health and stability. Both are features of the natural history of our species, capable of adapting us better to the world or of estranging us further from it" (17). Meeker discussed the eco-regressive factors associated with Western cultures and religions that emphasise "man's ascendency over nature" and also noted that they were generally preferred to "those which define man and nature as a single integrated system" (16). Moreover, "Pastoral longing for a tamed nature has been preferred to picaresque strategies for adaptation and survival under wild conditions" (Meeker 16–17). There is no doubt that literature is potentially powerful in the shaping of human attitudes towards the environment but this effect is difficult to determine because of ideologies manifested through a range of, sometimes negative and/or contradictory aesthetics (see previous discussion on the Romantic legacy). Aesthetic styles in fiction and film can sustain ideals which are eco-regressive, by concealing threats and destruction and thus closing off opportunities for readers to develop a sense of kinship and an ethos of care. Leo Marx explains in *The Machine in the Garden* (1964) that his "special concern is to show how the pastoral ideal has been incorporated in a powerful metaphor of contradiction"

(4). Marx demonstrates how the American pastoral ideal, represented by the utopian "garden" is transformed into a machinery-driven industrial society. Contemporary examples of eco-regressive aesthetics include representations of nature as threatening (traditional/Tasmanian Gothic), disguising or denying pollution and destruction (traditional Romantic) and misrepresenting environments as pristine. I discuss various aesthetic styles and their strengths and limitations in terms of environmental advocacy throughout my textual analysis.

Buell's work argues for the potential of imaginative work to stimulate environmental concern and action but he acknowledges the difficulties of embracing a deep-ecology or ecocentric ethos in contemporary life: "human beings cannot be expected to live by ecocentrism alone" (*Endangered* 7). Jonathan Bate also reminds us that "the true deep ecologist is a utopian who forgets that 'utopia' literally means 'nowhere'' (*Song* 37). Nevertheless, I am in accord with Bate's argument in that: "the dream of deep ecology will never be realised upon the earth, but our survival as a species may be dependent on our capacity to dream it in the work of our imagination" (*Song* 37–38). The implication here is that an imagined deep ecology ethos may translate into actual environmental concern and eco-progressive action. Buell encourages people to include representations of nature into their everyday stories (*Endangered World* 1). [12] Quoting from Ulrich Beck, Buell points out that, "the success of all environmentalist efforts finally hinges not on 'some highly developed technology, or some arcane new science' but on 'a state of mind': on attitudes, feeling, images, narratives'" (qtd. in

[12] In 2010 Morton suggests "a truly ecological reading practice would think the environment beyond rigid conceptual categories" and argues for a time when not just art specifically *about* the natural world will be considered ecological art (*Ecological Thought*, 11). Instead, Morton argues: "We will soon be accustomed to wondering what any text says about the environment even if no animals or trees or mountains appear in it" (*Ecological Thought*, 11).

Endangered World 1). Buell's four points of engagement with the world, through acts of environmental imagination, remain relevant:

> They [creative writers] may connect readers vicariously with others' experience, suffering, pain: that of nonhumans as well as humans. They may reconnect readers with places they have been and send them where they would otherwise never physically go. They may direct thought toward alternative futures. And they may affect one's caring for the physical world: make it feel more or less precious or endangered or disposable. All this may befall a moderately attentive reader reading about a cherished, abused, or endangered place. (*Endangered World* 2)

The novels and films chosen for analysis in this thesis are all works of fiction yet all constitute varying levels of environmental intervention. Reading and close attention to these imaginative works reveal "alternative possibilities" for humanity's relationship with the environment, even if these are not consciously intended (Belsey 89).

In the context of the pleasures of reading fiction, Belsey notes the persuasive potential of our "romance" with language: "Fiction … creates imaginary worlds and comments in the process on our own. … And because it deals in desire, most powerful of imperatives, it can coax us to compare in any number of different ways how things are with how they might be" (127). Belsey also questions the privileging of realism "as the default position" over other genres and reminds us to be consciously alert to a criticism that stifles challenges to conventional genres and political positions (55, 69). To reflect contemporary ecological insights and concerns imaginative representation needs to maintain an ecocentric balance. This point is extended by Greg Garrard: "In addition to clever technologies, wily policies and ethical revaluations … we shall need better, less anthropocentric metaphors" to respond to environmental crisis (*Ecocriticism* 205). The contemporary texts analysed in this thesis offer

diverse opportunities to explore both actual and metaphorical representations of environmental disasters and human/nonhuman relations within this context.

From her early work Rigby writes of language and environment and how they shape each other, but emphasises that ultimately the material world, the referent, is an entity in its own right, regardless of the role of culture and rhetoric. As Kate Soper points out: "it is not language that has a hole in its ozone layer; and the 'real' thing continues to be polluted and degraded even as we refine our deconstructive insights at the level of the signifier" (151). Consistent with the precautionary principle in ethics, Rigby constructs an argument that writers have a moral imperative to help and to hope as the effects of global warming unfold on the Earth. With "the grim potential, or unfolding reality" of ecocide, Rigby wants her words to make a difference ("Anthropocene" 1). She explains that in previous work her approach has been "to sing the praises of the living Earth" (an echo of Bate's *Song of the Earth* perhaps), but now she is "concerned less with praise than critique, leaning more towards lamentation than celebration" ("Anthropocene" 3).

Rigby also discusses the roles of apocalyptic and optimistic narrative templates in the context of anthropogenic climate change challenges. She acknowledges a socio-scientific shift away from *preventing* global warming to one of adaptation to inevitable catastrophes for some populations, but also more widespread recognition of environmental injustices and inequities. Despite the rise of environmental justice movements, however, Rigby insists that adaptation measures "remain remorselessly anthropocentric. Ethical concern, if addressed at all, is almost universally restricted to members of our own species (or even more narrowly, to what gets defined as the national interest, generally framed in reductively economic terms)" ("Imagining Catastrophe" 65).

Research into eco-justice and new concepts of harm by criminologist Rob White intersects with some of Rigby's concerns to reveal both obstacles and progress related to

recognising and legalising nonhuman rights. Many of these tensions are evoked by the narratives analysed in this thesis. White extends ideas of "social harm" (a term he uses to separate natural causes like cyclones and earthquakes from anthropogenic harm) beyond human needs to concern about the health and well-being of "specific environments and animals" (R. White, *Environmental Harm* 3). White also observes that the distribution and cumulative impact of toxins through the natural processes of water and air movement are: "a localised problem … [that] contains the seeds of a global dilemma" (*Environmental Harm* 61). In *Green Criminology* White and co-author Diane Heckenberg adopt a broad approach to environmental harm which at times considers "harms associated with legal activities (such as the clear felling of old-growth forests)" (8–9). Their work encompasses recent discourse on ecological citizenship, recognition of a legal identity for geographical features like the landmark case of the Whanganui River in New Zealand and recent efforts to make anthropogenic ecocide the fifth International Crime Against Peace (190, 84–85, 54). White's and Heckenberg's research has been highly influential in the development of my own ethical understanding and implicitly orients my textual analysis.

Widespread eco-injustice, driven by anthropocentric agendas, influences Rigby's belief that dystopian visions can function as warnings. While they provide examples of how not to proceed, however, Rigby recognises that they can also risk alienating people altogether if they construct nature as "enemy" and/or leave no opportunity for hope ("Imagining Catastrophe" 71). She suggests that if the predicted climate change disasters occur, then "dystopian visions of socio-ecological crisis and catastrophe could potentially play a differently valuable role, namely in assisting us to prefigure better and worse ways of responding to disaster, both in the event, and in the lead-up and aftermath ("Imagining Catastrophe" 71). She believes it is important to *imagine* both utopian and dystopian scenarios as a means to understanding how we can change to better practices, and that this in itself is a reason for optimism. Rigby's

emphasis on imagination's power to influence actual behaviours is in accord with arguments I outlined earlier, by Buell and Belsey. Rigby's argument for the potential of both dystopian and utopian scenarios supports my approach, that is, to analyse fictional representations of regional wilderness settings as "moral laboratories" by testing a range of ideas and scenarios through multiple points-of-view.

More optimistic scenarios for contemporary fictional narratives about the environment are also prioritised by Emily Potter. Almost a decade ago, in response to "a host of social and political imperatives" which tell us Australian fiction "has lost its sense of ethical urgency," Potter argues "for a reappraisal of what is considered to be an ecological consciousness in literature" ("Ecological Crisis" 1). Potter, argues for a move away from imperialist and anthropocentric framing of debates which silences "the other" (albeit it subaltern groups or nonhumans), and for a literary aesthetic more attuned to "the living ecology" reflected by "new scientific paradigms" ("Ecological Crisis" 3). Potter identifies one of the limits of ecological discourse (at this time) as a preoccupation with green perspectives and symbols of sustainability (which she lists as "trees, 'wilderness', clean air, clean water," as examples) and their explicit or metonymic articulation in story ("Ecological Crisis" 2–3). While Potter's perspective is valid I argue that, on the surface at least, it seems to ignore the ecological realities of these "symbols." Furthermore, as realities (and often as archetypal symbols) trees, rivers, wild places, etc., serve as common denominators amongst cultures, not only of past loss but of what still is and what can be again. As I discuss later, in relation to Heise, these basic physiological needs begin a process of local, national and global interconnection which creates a pathway for deeper emotional and spiritual links.

As Potter's paper progresses, however, it is clear that she is more concerned with the mode of representation of these "green symbols" than with the material nature of the symbols themselves. She argues for a poetics which goes "beyond a dichotomy of damage and unity"

for one which reflects chaos, uncertainty and the dynamic agency of the nonhuman ("Ecological Crisis" 4). Potter promotes metaphor as an effective means to represent "a living ecology," because it can evoke enchantment or affective engagement, with the nonhuman world. It also allows for the understanding that any attempt at representation is anthropocentric, in the final analysis:

> Yet a reluctance in popular understanding of environment and subjectivity to countenance unsettlement and uncertainty means that those fictions already employing these motifs poetically will be missed or discounted from ecological significance. As Lawrence Buell describes, metaphor is a mode of "partial realisation" —that is, it signifies incomplete knowledge rather than a totalising claim on the real. Metaphor refuses a final and stable meaning and is poetically "rough," admitting slippages and uncertainties into any attempt to represent the world. ("Ecological Crisis" 4)

Throughout my textual analysis, I demonstrate how both contemporary ecological representations of wilderness and genres like magic realism, which usually incorporate metaphor, symbols and allegory, can be successful aesthetic means to reinstate the referent. Through imagination, empiricism and intuition can interact to enhance affective engagement, and deepen understanding of the shifting dynamics within and between human and nonhuman nature. In a discussion of "different modes of representation—the positivist and the poetic—[which] fulfil different functions, but connect on a significant level," Potter explains that: "The value of the latter is to overcome the instrumentality of science in order to work on affective rather than rational levels" (Climate Change 1). She quotes McKibben's view on the relation between scientific and discursive or artistic representation: "'We can register what is happening with satellites and scientific instruments,' he writes, 'but can we register it in our imaginations, the most sensitive of all our devices?'" (qtd. in "Climate Change" 1). My analysis of *River Guide, River Wife* and *The Hunter*, in particular, examine the use of metaphor to express

nonhuman agency, instability and vulnerability. Central to my exploration of *River Guide* are literary tropes of rivers and rainforest that express agency and primordial kinship. In Leigh's novel *The Hunter,* I examine the thylacine as a metaphor for extinctions and loss more generally and on a global scale. Ultimately, the texts and my analyses "suggest new ways to apprehend the present world and offer imaginaries of what might be, not as blueprints but to clear space for a relationship with a present world and future that includes possibility and experimentation" (Shewry 9). Readers can imaginatively test characters' ethical ideas and circumstances against their own experiences through the "laboratory" of their own moral conscience.

Buell and Belsey recommend extending the range of ecocriticism to include experimental modes like the genre of magic realism. Underpinned by the insights from Jack Zipes, my study of *The River Wife* reveals how the hybrid genre of fairy tale and magic realism can function as a "political weapon" to express environmental concerns (*Art of Subversion* 131). I also draw on Deborah O'Keefe's overall argument, in *Readers in Wonderland,* that fantasy-fiction can stimulate new perspectives and serve as a persuasive means to disseminate environmental issues. Similarly, Michael Branch challenges conventional attitudes to genre as he argues for satire as "a tool of battle" for ecocriticism (388). Branch's perspective orients my approach to Cate Kennedy's use of humour in *World Beneath*. These relatively experimental modes generally deliver a more palatable reading experience than the declensionist narratives of conventional environmental literature. In turn readers are more likely to engage with ecological concerns when sober warnings are embedded in pleasurable (in Belsey's sense of pleasure as an element of the literary experience) narratives that allow for hope.

Environmental Prophecy/Hope

Diverse aesthetic representations of unfolding disasters are recommended by Buell and Rigby and the latter writes extensively about the importance of hope for future change:

> Environmentalists [and by association ecocritics one assumes] tend to be pessimists of the intellect and optimists of the heart. No matter how grim the statistics … we continue to wager on the possibility that the extraordinary beauty, diversity and fecundity of the earth can, in some measure, yet be saved, and that we might one day learn to live on this earth more equitably. Buoyed by this leap of faith, we continue to seek for sources of hope: places from which change for the better might be initiated. ("Ecocriticism" 158)

Teresa Shewry also argues for the importance of hope as a mode of engagement in environmental struggles (5). In the context of climate change she acknowledges that "hope might be understood as a passive or weak way of interacting" but for Shewry "the importance of hope lies in the relationship it forges with a future that is open, or that is a site of possibility rather than is locked into one trajectory" (25, 178–79). In Tasmania's environmental history the battle for Lake Pedder was lost but hope for future successes fuelled a growing activism. Efforts by grassroots campaigners, politicians, artists, celebrities and support volunteers culminated in one of the most globally high profile protest victories when the damming of the Franklin River was stopped. Although climate change is a much larger scale challenge, I argue that hope is a necessary ingredient for advocacy, albeit direct action or aesthetic representation. To be motivated humans need to believe they have a chance to make a difference. Victories like the Franklin River Blockade, (where the bulldozers had already commenced deforestation before the High Court Order to cease arrived) remain a beacon of hope for future environmental struggles. "The power dynamics that shape environmental life are always on the move and being unsettled, but the legacies of these histories run deep" (Shewry 55).

Hope is also derived from our responses to other individuals and communities, both human and nonhuman, in times of disasters like floods and bushfire, the latter forming an intrinsic part of Tasmanian's landscape history. Stories of immense courage and collective

effort, in increasingly fragmented societies, are not "passive" but encouraging, and provide a rational basis for hope. Shewry reminds us of organisations and individuals, locally and globally, who stand up to "their countries, peoples and institutions that are most reponsible" for environmental degradation by demanding changes to greenhouse gas emissions, for example (182–83). Hope, generated by these cultural, political and ethical changes, can be reflected in aesthetic representations. Amid representations of mining pollution, deforestation and consumerism "hope flashes up" in writers' stories that express an increasing awareness of human/nonhuman kinship and a developing empathy (184).

Because imaginative representation allows for behaviours and outcomes to be otherwise it is an ideal vehicle for hope. Rigby defends the value of writing as "prophetic witness" and explains that the role of the prophet is not to predict the future but to identify hazards and to warn against them:

> in biblical Greek, *apocalypsis* simply means 'to uncover' or 'reveal', and the apocalyptic task of the prophetic imagination is to disclose those current societal ills, the unacknowledged sources of injustice and suffering, that are bound to bring catastrophe if they are not redressed before it is too late. ("Imagining Catastrophe" 70)

For Rigby "prophetic speech is inspired by the imaginative capacity to see through and beyond those conventional attitudes, assumptions and patterns of behaviour that engender or support oppression" which then creates opportunity for new paradigms of thought ("Anthropocene" 4). The concept allows for moral and emotional complexity: "The prophet speaks with the voice of grief: but also, implicitly or explicitly of hope. Prophetic speech incites lamentation in order to engender transformation, at the same time that it warns of what will ensue if the people fail to heed the call" (Rigby, "Anthropocene" 4). Rigby's notion of hope through prophecy is evident through several elements of the texts I examine, particularly the character of the Winter King, an environmental trope for climate change, in Rose's magic realist fairy tale *The River*

Wife. In Leigh's novel, *The Hunter*, I position the author herself as the "prophet," delivering a bleak warning for the future of the Earth's species.

Shared Materiality/ Entanglement/ Kinship

Once hope is established, opportunity is created for writers and readers to imagine innovative and healthier practices, for sustaining the planet's fragile ecology. Potter asserts that not only does climate change alter the earth's living conditions for many species, including humans, it also "reveals the limitations of our dominant frames of reference for thinking on a range of matters" ("Climate Change" 36). Ultimately, Potter argues for an opportunity (created by the disruption of climate change) to pursue "a different kind of belonging, one that does not depend upon violence done to human and nonhuman others," and for an ethic which recognises the entangled life of other species and global interaction ("Climate Change" 37–38). Potter's approach resonates with ecocritical theories of entanglement, shared materiality and kinship which I apply throughout the textual interpretations.

The concept of shared materiality, in twenty-first-century ecocriticism, also refers to the entanglement of human and nonhuman matter.[13] Elements like earth, water, blood and skin, for example, merge in a mutually nurturing exchange. Material exchanges, however, can also be toxic, for example, pollution (like mining sludge or plastic waste) which is created by humans but is detrimental to many life-forms. In this context of shared materiality and entanglement plastic particles may become embedded in land and marine fauna and flora while industrial pollution can diminish the health and wellbeing of humans and nonhumans.

Developments in material ecocriticism extend insights into imaginative representations of human/nonhuman entanglement. Iovino and Serpil Oppermann note that "one of the key-

[13] See next section 'Affective Narration' for discussion of pioneer work on 'entanglement' (shared materiality) and affect theory by David Abram in *The Spell of the Sensuous*.

points of the 'material turn' is a pronounced reaction against some radical trends of postmodern and post-structuralist thinking that allegedly 'dematerialized' the world into linguistic and social constructions" (76). In environmental terms this requires a retrieval of the concrete, the bodily dimension, that is, a reinstatement of the referent, both human and nonhuman, from the discourse of cultural representation. In literary texts "matter, in all its forms, … becomes a *site of narrativity* [and] the text … encompasses both human material-discursive constructions and nonhuman things: water, soil, stones, metals, minerals, bacteria, toxins, food, electricity, cells, atoms, all cultural objects and places" (Iovino and Oppermann 83). The resulting sense of entanglement collapses the conventional active subject (human) and passive object (nonhuman) dichotomy. Consequently, a posthumanist vision of reality understands the human and nonhuman as "confluent, co-emergent, and defining each other in mutual relations" (Iovino and Oppermann 86). It "questions the givenness of the split … and emphasizes their hybridizations, their co-operative configurations, and their intra-actions" (Iovino and Oppermann 86). Moreover, confluence and entanglement between discourse and matter, and between human and nonhuman can be enhanced through affective narration.

Affective Narration

Emphasising shared materiality serves to reinstate the corporeal elements of kinship between humans and nonhumans. Language, and literary aesthetics generally, can facilitate or alienate this sense of connection. As Elizabeth Leane points out, in the context of imaginative representations of the Antarctic landscape: "Antarctica is not a 'wide white page' endlessly waiting to be inscribed, nor is literature a cultural pollutant blocking access to its pristine wilderness" (284). Instead, the ways we write about wilderness, not just what we say but how we say it, can extend or diminish our understanding and caring. The concept of affective narration refers to depictions of human emotional and sensory exchange that, in the case of

environmental literature, are used to create a sense of immersion and interdependence with the dynamic nonhuman world.

David Abram's work *The Spell of the Sensuous* (1996) considers our ancient reciprocity and our eventual self-separation from the wider community of nature, and argues that we need to renew our sensuous participation and perception with the material world. He believes "we need to know the textures, the rhythms and tastes of the bodily world, and to distinguish between such tastes and those of our own invention" (x). Many of our artefacts retain elements of more-than-human otherness, for examples, "the tree-trunk of the telephone pole, the clay of the bricks," but for much of our mass-produced goods this dynamism is lost because "they are closed off from the rest of the earth, imprisoned within technologies that plunder the living land" (Abram 64). Abram contrasts the geometric form of contemporary architecture with "the wild, earth-born nature of the materials" from the landscape and argues that the formal design "makes our animal senses wither even as they support the abstract intellect" (64).

Abram draws from the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty who rejects the ego as the central self and instead begins to identify "the subject—the experiencing 'self'—with the bodily organism" (45). In his discussion of the material entanglement between human and nonhuman life, Abram acknowledges that living forms draw substance and sustenance from each other: "from the soils, plants, and elements that surround" them and that "it is very difficult to discern, at any moment, precisely where this living body begins and where it ends." (46–47). Abram recognises that participation, that is, immersion and entanglement with nonhuman matter, alters our levels and modes of perception. We are not only experiencing through our intellect but also with our senses and this combination, when expressed aesthetically, heightens affect.

Buell, Kerridge, Potter, and Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin are among scholars who identify the potential of affective components in environmental literature to develop an ethic of care or concern. Kerridge's concept of "care" encompasses "feeling and action" and

acknowledges that "many ecocritics feel that their work has an activist mission" (363, 62). Postcolonial scholars Huggan and Tiffin explain ecocriticism as a *way* of reading that is "as much affective as analytical—not that the two terms are mutually exclusive" (13). Potter explores the power of imaginative literature to evoke not just intellectual, but also affective responses which shape human attitudes and motivate behavioural change ("Climate Change" 1). Although ecocritical concepts and priorities are still evolving, literary texts continue to function as "acts of environmental imagination" that may "affect one's caring for the physical world," making that world "feel more or less precious or endangered or disposable" (Buell, *Endangered World* 2). This thesis explores how contemporary writers and filmmakers imagine the entanglement of corporeal connections between the human and nonhuman and the resulting range of affective responses expressed. Science presents technicalities and statistics to raise environmental awareness while the humanities utilise emotions and imagination to stimulate ethical responses to environmental degradation. Concepts of affective narration and shared materiality provide a partial framework to analyse the aesthetics of representation in the selected films and novels. Ultimately, I consider their usefulness in reflecting human impact on Tasmanian wilderness areas.

Affective narration is a key topic for twenty-first century ecocriticism but it is not a new approach to writing about unfolding environmental disaster. Aspects of Rachel Carson's 1962 biological science publication, *Silent Spring*, anticipate contemporary theories of affective narration. Part of Carson's original (and controversial at the time) contribution to environmental discourse was her decision to embed her pollution concerns in a fictional preface which took the form of a pastoral fairy tale entitled "A Fable for Tomorrow." Carson's motivation for *Silent Spring* was to draw attention to the adverse effects to human health and wildlife of new organic pesticides such as DDT, Aldrin and dieldrin. She expressed her scientific concerns through the "use of pastoral and apocalyptic imagery and literary allusions"

(Garrard, *Ecocriticism* 1). Beginning with the evocation of a peaceful rural hamlet where human activity was in accord with the natural world Carson deconstructs this ideal into a rapidly unfolding environmental tragedy. As a result, readers are moved affectively as well as intellectually to take notice of the natural world. Furthermore, Carson's "secularised prophetic mode" serves as a caution which allows for hope through altered behavioural patterns, rather than traditionally apocalyptic "forecasts [of] inevitable doom" (Hutchings 51). Carson's influence can be observed through Rose's aesthetics in her cautionary tale, *The River Wife*, and also through Leigh's bleak narrative, that allows for hope through prophecy, in *The Hunter*.

Hope is one of three constitutive elements, the others being nostalgia and desire, defining affect (Davidson, Park and Shields, 8). In their twenty-first century focus on the urban and the virtual Tonya K. Davidson, Ondine Park and Rob Shields explain, the sense of the term "affect" has shifted from merely "an emotive counterpart or element of a concept" back to Barusch Spinoza's "more materialist approach" (4–5). Spinoza regarded emotion and imagination working together, and through our emotions—our loves and hates, our fears and hopes—he links affect to bodies and ecologies (5). Drawing also from Gilles Deleuze (who builds on Spinoza's approach) Davidson, Park and Shields suggest affect "fuses the body with the imagination into an ethical synthesis" through three main "affectual modalities … with different temporal orientations" (8). These modes—nostalgia, desire and hope—can be usefully applied to contemporary ecocriticism (8). While nostalgia is oriented toward the past, desire situated in the present, and hope directed toward the future, these concepts "often overlap," resulting in an intense experience of place informed by all three affects simultaneously (8). Initially Davidson, Park and Shield's aim to "inspire readers to consider space and place beyond their material properties and attend to the imaginary places, [and] ideals," may seem to run counter to the imperative to reinstate the referent, the actual material environment, driving this thesis (6). However, they regard "intangible objects that underpin

and produce material places and social spaces" as "real ecologies" which blend affectively with material properties (6). They describe the concept of hope as *virtual,* i.e., not material but "nevertheless real and thus [something which] must be accounted for" (7). Hope created through prophetic imagination is the affective mode underpinning several of the narratives selected for analysis.

In accord with Iovino, Heather Houser points out the necessity of "an array of stories and narrative affects" to represent "material and conceptual relays between the embodied individual and large-scale environmental forces" (3–4). Houser focuses her analysis on contemporary authors, who like Carson in 1962, "seek to convince readers that animal and human bodies are barometers of ecosystemic toxicity" (5). Houser argues that "affect is pivotal to the complexity of emergent concerns about climate change, species extinction, pervasive toxicity, population growth, capitalist expansion, and technoscientific innovations" (8) In accord with Houser's argument, my analysis of Julia Leigh's representation of anthropogenic extinction in *The Hunter* demonstrates how the affective component is enticing, as it vacillates between the attractions of hope and the repulsions of despair. The hunter's detached point-of-view and clinical language is at odds with his corporeal merging with wilderness and his self-projection as a mate for his prey. Yet this disturbing tension between emotional alienation and bodily immersion is the main driver in Leigh's compelling narrative—one that ultimately raises awareness about anthropogenic extinctions. By representing a particular species' extinction, in a remote Australian island, Leigh's prophetic narrative succeeds in creating "a perception of raised stakes" and a "daunting sense of responsibility" which resonate with planetary scale concerns about the predicted sixth mass extinction (Buell, "Ecoglobalist Affects" 232).

Local Natures and Global Responsibilities

The relationship between local and global imaginations, within the context of environmentalism, underpins my approach to the selected texts. Commitment to global ethics

and the nurturing of local ties are not, I argue, mutually exclusive. The regional texts analysed serve as moral laboratories and yield towards a planetary "ecological citizenship" (Potter, "Climate Change" 2). Potter explains the ideal as "a new site of political representation … within which the environment is understood as 'a public good to defend' …. For humans, the traditional focus of citizenry rights shifts to the responsibility, or obligation, to service … nonhuman rights, as well as those of future human generations" ("Climate Change" 2).

Like Potter, Ursula K. Heise also argues for "the urgency of developing an ideal of 'eco-cosmopolitanism,'" or environmental world citizenship as a way for the future (Heise 10). Heise believes that "rather than focussing on the recuperation of a sense of place" contemporary environmentalism needs to examine the changing connections of kinship and shared materiality between human and nonhuman nature (21). While Heise does not undervalue localism, including its role as resistance to more negative cultural and economic aspects of globalism, she writes extensively about the contradictions and tensions between local and global imaginations.[14] She explains that her approach, within the context of environmentalism, is principally "meant to point to ways of imagining the global that frame localism from a globalist environmental perspective" (9). She notes an ambivalence within globalisation theories of "deterritorialization" because the term evokes a sense of loss of local identity (210). Heise argues that an eco-cosmopolitan approach offers some resistance to this sense of local loss by linking local and global communities "both ecologically and culturally" (210). One of the challenges in environmental literature is to write local stories about global transformations, which bridge this local/global gap without homogenising more particular differences, for example, between the West and less developed nations. As this thesis argues, representing

[14] See Appendix One for a brief discussion of the complexities of bioregionalism and Heise's concept of "deterritorialization".

climate change is just one of the challenges that can be addressed, through the environmental imagination, by concepts of kinship bonds, nonhuman agency, shared materiality and affective narration. In response to Heise's deliberations on the significance of the local to environmental ethics, I emphasise the extent to which particular ecological disasters, as represented in the selected Tasmanian narratives, deepen understanding of universal environmental change.

The identification of mutual basic needs begins the process of imaginative integration of local and global and human and nonhuman life forms. All life forms require sustenance of some kind from their environment, with humans and nonhuman species dependent on elemental basics like air (except for some water-dwellers), water, food, certain climatic conditions and physical space to function and develop. Until recently, the developed world took for granted a continuing supply of these natural resources, but in the twenty-first century their sustainability assumes an unprecedented urgency. Problems like floods, droughts, deforestations and soil erosion have different impacts in different contexts but ultimately all relate to quality and availability of basic needs for species to flourish. Rigby notes "Ruskin's remarkably contemporary insight that the material basis of political economy is neither money nor labor nor technology but "'Pure Air, Water, and Earth'" (qtd. in *Topographies of the Sacred* 3). To suggest that these physiological needs are the only planetary-scale connections amongst and between species and cultures is reductive. Most obvious is the exclusion of ethical, social and/or spiritual dimensions (albeit culturally specific). Acknowledging these mutual physiological needs, however, opens a discussion pathway for one of the most pressing environmental issues: global warming, which "literary criticism rarely directly addresses" (Clark 10). Timothy Clark argues that this neglect is due to the immensity of scale of the issue and relatively recent strength of the scientific data, rather than authorial neglect (11).

Representations of global warming are addressed by Potter, in a co-authored publication with Paul Starr, a government sustainability expert. They examine an advertisement

designed for the Victorian Government's "Black Balloon" television campaign (2006) which was intended to encourage the use of renewable energy in the home. The ad "depicts household CO2 emissions through the 'release' of black balloons from a range of domestic sources—each equivalent to fifty grams of greenhouse gas" (Potter and Starr 1). "The strikingly visual metaphor of the balloons," as invisible greenhouse gases which gain momentum and disperse into the skies, extends to represent the far-reaching dynamic consequences of climate-change (Potter and Starr 2). In turn this links the local to the global through "shifting ecologies" and "the realignment of political, economic and cultural interests" (Potter and Starr 2). Ultimately, Potter and Starr subvert North/South hemisphere binaries for a more nuanced approach to place relation, an "ecological citizenship" metaphorically represented by the "ecological footprint"[15] which acknowledges interdependence on a global scale ("Climate Change" 4):

> The mobility of forces and effects illuminated by climate change challenge ask us to reconsider what it means to take care of something that is simultaneously close and distant. … In time of climate change it is vital to … see ourselves in the world in terms *both* concrete *and* as participants in networks that stretch beyond what is right here and now, into other places, other systems, other times and other lives. (Potter and Starr 7)

The practice of thinking globally and acting locally informs many environmental movements, most significantly for this thesis is the anti-damming protest campaign to save the Franklin River, an event represented in several of the texts chosen for analysis.

[15] The ecological footprint has become the emblem of ecological citizenship. Potter describes it as a "signature concept, tool and new measure of citizenship that has risen to prominence in the popular environmental imagination. … [which] illustrates well the convergence of the positivist and the poetic modes of representation" ("Climate Change" 2).

Diverse narratives may serve as learning experiences to stimulate the conscience of society in ways which may then change attitudes and practices. Iovino explains that "ecocriticism looks for cultural instruments: literature in particular" to both reveal and reflect the human/nonhuman relationship (40). She argues for a commitment to:

> listen to 'peripheral narratives' and to include them in the order of telling; to translate them from 'vernacular' into 'history', to acknowledge them as *histories*, but without conceptually isolating or juxtaposing them with each other. [thus] … the narratives themselves [form] a dialectical synthesis, in which the normativeness of value is located. It is this very connection (typical of ecocriticism) between the singularity of the narratives and the universality of their normative content that enables us to speak of local natures and global responsibilities. (43)

By disrupting the status quo and representing plural perspectives and alternative pathways, fictional narratives may generate new levels of environmental awareness and engage local and global interests and responses.

This discussion of recent developments in ecocriticism has concentrated largely on the power of the environmental imagination, through a range of literary theories, concepts and techniques, to evoke a sense of kinship between humans and nonhumans. To this end I have synthesised fundamental ecocritical theories of fiction as environmental advocacy with recent theories of entanglement. Concepts, including shared materiality and the contemporary ecological or toxic sublime, serve to reinstate a sense of the environment as a material reality and as an extended corporeal self. In turn, the local environment, the Tasmanian wilderness represented in the texts, is recognised, in my analysis, as a node in a global network that potentially inspires a sense of responsibility for planetary ecological health. The following chapters examine a collection of contemporary imaginative representations of Tasmanian wilderness. The approach adopted demonstrates how these texts form a regional lens into a

deeper understanding of unfolding ecological disasters, for humans and nonhumans, that are on a global scale.

Chapter One, "'There is no Wilderness'—Tasmania's fractured aesthetic" provides national and local historical contexts, in terms of space and place, for the other seven chapters of primary textual analysis. In addition, this first chapter considers the relevance and usefulness of the culturally constructed concept of "wilderness," an ideal which maintains certain ethical and political discourses that are not in accord with Indigenous occupation of the land. Such ethical complexities, coupled with Tasmania's blend of Australian and European-like topography, have implications for aesthetic representation. Contemporary authors and filmmakers adopt similar methods to landscape painters and photographers, albeit different mediums, to *construct* their imaginative representations of Tasmania's historically layered wilderness. From the context of "colonial picturesque" I extend Ian McLean's concept of a "fractured aesthetic," into a contemporary ecological version, and then apply it to my selected texts. Diverse, and sometimes competing, wilderness representations in the texts analysed offer opportunities to explore synthesis of contesting regimes of representation, and also the implications of unresolved tensions.

Discussion of these aesthetic representations of wilderness, in the selected texts, begins in Chapter Two, ""Tasmanian Gothic" and emerging ecological dialogue in *The Tale of Ruby Rose*". Roger Scholes' 1987 film *Ruby Rose* is a mainly conventional Gothic/Romantic portrayal of the Central Plateau wilderness. Set in 1933 and produced in 1987, *Ruby Rose* is the earliest text I examine both in terms of main narrative timeframe and also release date. Historically representations of the Tasmanian wilderness in literature and film typically interpret the place as a Gothic space where monstrous colonial and postcolonial violence forms part of the regional symbolism. "Tasmanian Gothic" has become a recognised sub-genre of Australian literature and its lingering effects interact with, and sometimes fracture, more

contemporary ecological representations of Tasmania's wilderness. The dominant threatening mood of *Ruby Rose* draws heavily from the Gothic tradition but, I argue, moments of emerging ecological dialogue render the film an effective point of departure for analysing more recent texts depicting Tasmanian wilderness.

"Tasmanian Gothic" sensibilities represent only one group's point-of-view in Chapter Three, "River and Rainforest Symbolism and Representations of Kinship in Richard Flanagan's *Death of a River Guide*." Instead Flanagan's novel is underpinned by the theme of kinship between humans and nonhumans. These relationships are expressed through a blend of Eurocentric and Indigenous symbols, and are represented by two main groups of characters in the text. I highlight the primordial sense of kinship with the wilderness represented by the Romanticised Indigenous shared materiality and spirituality of the river guide, Aljaz, and his ancestors. In contrast, voyeuristic ecotourists (also a metaphor for consumerism and exploitation generally) represent alienation, expressed, at times, through a residual Gothic aesthetic. *River Guide,* I argue, highlights unresolved tensions still being played out, (both locally and globally) between conservationists and commercial enterprises. Ultimately, the novel's Gothic and Romantic aesthetics are overshadowed by its poetic and magic realist representations which, through a sense of nonhuman agency and entanglement, reveal actual, eco-material conditions of fragile wilderness ecology.

Discussion of magic realism and fairy tale are central in Chapter Four through an analysis of Heather Rose's *The River Wife* which demonstrates the effectiveness of these genres for contemporary discourse on climate change and environmental concerns generally. *The River Wife* is a series of love stories which, I argue, subtly operate as environmental advocacy. As in Flanagan's *River Guide*, hybridity within characters, and in cultural and literary representations, enhances the narrative themes. The character of *The River Wife* (she is part human and part fish) metaphorically represents environmental health and wellbeing and I read

her relationships with four other "characters" as environmental tropes. My analysis highlights how Rose's allusions to European, Celtic and Indigenous mythology combined with classical and subversive fairy tale scenarios achieve an affective narration. Moreover, her representation of inevitable changes, global warming and encroaching human development on wilderness specifically, reflect Rigby's sense of ecoprophetic witness. Rose positions poetic vision (and by extension prophetic vision) as a form of lived knowledge that, I suggest, creates a pathway for local and global transformation of environmental consciousness.

The focus of Chapter Five, "Environmental Satire as Sword and Shield in Cate Kennedy's *The World Beneath*" is the representation of ethical dilemmas associated with promoting wilderness for ecotourism. To this end I examine the novel's use of satire to effectively convey the impact of ecotourism to a mainstream audience. Kennedy gently satirises environmental activists and consumers alike to reveal elements of hypocrisy and superiority within all groups. Teenage idealism, middle-aged nostalgia, novice arrogance, "know-it-all" expertise—even the wilderness wildlife and the famous Overland bushwalk itself—are grist for her humour. The novel's diverse characters generate multiple perceptions of the same wilderness, resulting in an enriched, and globally relevant, understanding of the human/nonhuman relationship. I frame my analysis through four main themes: activism, "green" consumerism, wilderness photography and ecotourism. Despite "moments" of Gothic and Romantic aesthetics, I maintain Kennedy presents a contemporary ecological representation of the Tasmanian wilderness that demythologises eco-regressive classic wilderness ideals. Instead, Kennedy's humorous narrative forms part of a contemporary collective mythology which depicts the actual conditions of the threatened Tasmanian wilderness.

Focus continues on ethical uses of Tasmanian's natural resources in Chapter Six: "'Harnessing Nature,' Community, Entanglement and Alienation in Richard Flanagan's *The*

Sound of One Hand Clapping and Cameron Hindrum's, *The Blue Cathedral*." Analysis of these novels is concentrated on representations of environmental and social devastation resulting from Tasmania's history of dam building, mining and forestry. Flanagan uses the trope of warfare to reveal both the people and the land as traumatised victims of exploitative industries and enterprises while Hindrum chooses the controversial Franklin River Dam protest to represent the impact of environmental conflicts on local communities. Entanglement and alienation between human and nonhuman communities in both narratives offer opportunities to explore Iovino's concept of co-presence (kinship). I argue that co-presence can also have a sinister dimension—co-dependence—resulting in dysfunctional, toxic communities and landscapes.

Chapter Seven, "'Writing in the midst of an unfolding disaster'—the ethics and aesthetic of representing anthropogenic extinction in Julia Leigh's novel, *The Hunter*" is a sobering chapter. Rigby's phrase, "writing in the midst of an unfolding disaster," as in my title, implies (among other things) that writers and filmmakers have ethical responsibilities. Through imaginative prophecy, Leigh's morally complex narrative creates a speculative second chance for the extinct Tasmanian thylacine, which I interpret partly as a global metaphor for extinction, loss of biodiversity and anthropogenic environmental destruction. Leigh's 1999 narrative increases in relevance and credibility in accord with advances in biotechnology. In the twenty-first century more species are under threat from developments in pharmaceuticals, private zoos and chemical weapons and, as *The Hunter* reveals, exploitative industries and enterprises may become the "trappers and hunters" of the future. I also compare Leigh's bleak ending in the novel with the modified and controversial film ending. Although Leigh's ending is shocking and dystopian, I argue that her prophetic imaginative narrative encourages changes in actual behaviour, and thus does not extinguish all hope. Ultimately, I consider the effectiveness, in

terms of environmental advocacy, of sober warnings, apocalyptic visions, narratives of resignation and adaptability and optimistic templates of hope.

In the final main chapter, Chapter Eight, "Recasting the monster: an ecoGothic reading of the film, *The Hunter* (2011), directed by Daniel Nettheim" I invert conventional Gothic depictions of a hostile environment (as present in much of *Ruby Rose*) and demonstrate how anthropogenic activities can be represented by authors, and read by critics, as the major hazard to the human/nonhuman relationship. In this approach humans may be cast as contemporary Gothic "monsters" that exploit and destroy the natural world, but also may be interpreted as prophetic warnings of ecological disaster. Ultimately, in accord with contemporary ecoGothic theory, my interpretation of the film overturns conventional Gothic depictions of a threatening Tasmanian wilderness to reveal a threatened and fragile ecology.

This Introduction has outlined the ecocritical position I adopt and the thesis aims and structure. It has provided an overview of the significant theories and concepts underpinning my textual analyses. Chapter One, which follows, provides national and historical contexts in terms of space and place, specifically the Tasmanian wilderness (the "referent") to clarify and deepen the interpretations of the fictional texts.

CHAPTER ONE:

"There is No Wilderness"—Tasmania's Fractured Aesthetic

"What is wilderness today—a wasteland, commodity, a tourist attraction, a carbon sink, a Tasmanian devil habitat, an ancient, natural refuge from the rat-race?"

(Haygarth 20)

Ideas of wilderness, like ideas of nature, are culturally constructed, but they also refer to actual, ecologically vulnerable physical spaces and places. Reinstating the referent, by reading fictional representations of Tasmania's wilderness against environmental history and contemporary ecological knowledge, is fundamental for ecocriticism. Consequently, this first chapter explores ecological conditions and literary aesthetics that are specific to Tasmanian wilderness, but which also resonate with many global issues. By examining wilderness ideals and debunking eco-regressive mythology, in the first part of this chapter, I establish a context within which actual contemporary environmental concerns, as represented in the primary texts, are highlighted. The chapter's second part explores Ian McLean's original, and my contemporary, concept of a "fractured aesthetic" as an effective mode of visual and literary representation for Tasmanian wilderness.

Perceptions of Wilderness

As the epigraph to this chapter illustrates, the meaning of wilderness, in the context of twenty-first-century Tasmania, is contingent upon shifting social, political and economic imperatives.[16] Moreover, these meanings are not necessarily mutually exclusive, as "we take

[16] It is important to note that "wildness and wilderness are not equivalent in definition, meaning, or importance. … While wilderness in Western culture is most often a place, wildness is the force behind places" (Grumbine 6–7).

different perspectives on nature and the environment on different occasions" [and] "we live with multiplicity" and complexity in our daily lives (Jamieson 5). Literature can capture multiple perspectives and changing paradigms to form an important dimension of cultural memory. In turn this generates "a cumulative quality to our cultural responses to nature: as our intellectual traditions evolve and as we gradually come to think of landscape differently" (Herendeen 18). In the anthropocene, an era of increasing environmental degradation, the style in which topographical features are conceptualised and represented has ethical consequences (Peppard 110).

Tasmania, which has a rich literary and natural heritage, is home to the formation of "the world's first Green party, the United Tasmania Group" (UTG) in March 1972.[17] The primary texts analysed in this thesis emerge from a cultural milieu of environmental debates and tensions across local, national and global communities. While the novels and films, discussed in the following chapters, are works of imagination, they represent actual regions. Environmental details are depicted with a high level of credibility. Attention is given to the wilderness-specific flora and fauna, in addition to the inclusion of explicit and implicit references to coexisting examples of anthropogenic environmental destruction. Both visual and literary wilderness representations in Tasmania have tended to follow a "classic wilderness"

[17] The United Tasmania Group was formed by a group of Lake Pedder activists. Many lessons had been learned after their Lake Pedder campaign defeat and by "1974 the UTG issued an economic, social and cultural manifesto set out in a document entitled 'The New Ethic'". In addition, "A new breed of political activist came into being" —Bob Brown "stood on the UTG Senate ticket in 1975 behind Dick Jones and gained only 112 votes" (Lohrey 13–15). By 1989 he was Parliamentary leader for the Tasmanian Greens and by 2005 he was the leader of the Australian Greens Party until his resignation in 2012.

trope although, as my textual analysis reveals, there is a shift occurring in the twenty-first century. Specifically, in the past the ecological impact of extraction industries and human impact generally have been disguised or denied in art and literature about Tasmania. This "silence" or "omission" is reminiscent of the manner in which colonial history renders the Indigenous occupation of the land as "invisible."

Most of my selected texts represent a "double vision," of Tasmania's landscape, by including depictions of anthropogenic degradation in their wilderness settings. I borrow from (and extend for ecocritical purposes) this term from the essay collection *Double Vision*, in particular Michael Rosenthal's chapter "The Penitentiary as Paradise." Rosenthal explains how colonial Sydney was sometimes depicted as a harsh penal settlement but also frequently represented as Arcadian or "Europeanized" (103–30). Neither of these conceits are accurate representations of the Australian landscape although it should be noted that the latter had some resonance with the actual Tasmanian wilderness, so different to that of mainland Australia. Tasmania's unique topography adds to the complexities of representation. In the interests of clarification, however, it should be noted that instead of "Europeanization" as a primarily *imagined* and *constructed* representation, as in much of Australian colonial art, including that of Tasmania (discussed below), the climate and topography of the Central Highlands and rainforests, which constitute most of Tasmania's wilderness, actually *are* more like parts of Europe than mainland Australia. As someone who lived her early childhood in the Central Highlands of Tasmania, and has also spent time in the Scottish Highlands and the moors and lakes of Connemara (Ireland) I can assure the reader that despite the differences in vegetation there are many material similarities between these landscapes. Consequently, double visions of Tasmanian wilderness are multiple, not all relevant for this research and most significantly, they are different, at least in degree, from those of Rosenthal. Europeanization is not the

representation analysed in this thesis, but rather I focus on the double vision of pristine wilderness and/or anthropogenic degradation.

Most of the texts I examine do not engage with the issue of Indigenous "invisibility" or colonialism. Instead, they create a "double vision" by interspersing or juxtaposing relatively pristine images of vulnerable wild places ("paradise") with entropic images of the legacy and ongoing anthropogenic violence to the land from mining, dam building, deforestation and general consumerism. Ethical and ecological dilemmas, emerging from marketing wilderness as a commodity for recreation and ecotourism, are also represented in varying degrees within the texts. To date, there has been little critical attention given to these particular textual representations of wilderness destruction, but they are central to my ecocritical analysis.

In art, ethical and aesthetic sensibilities mirror (and sometimes shape) cultural and social change. This is apparent in the dynamic concept of the environment and the resulting linguistic implications associated with the word "wilderness." Perceptions of wilderness are changing, and related concepts, which position the human as apart from and superior to nature, are being questioned across academic disciplines, particularly literary studies, philosophy and sociology. Deep ecologists for example challenge "the anthropocentrism at the heart of modern society" by deconstructing "hierarchical attitudes to the natural world [in order] to identify [themselves] within a broader circle of living things" (Marland 850). Resonating with such perceptual shifts are concepts which underpin this thesis, most particularly, Romantic ideas of "kinship" that may be "transformed" into posthumanist ideas of "entanglement" and shared materiality between human and nonhuman entities. Changes in perception, conceptualisation and material reality create new opportunities for writers, filmmakers (and artists in general).

While ideas about wilderness continue to evolve with new knowledge and changing cultural sensibilities, consistently wilderness areas have been partially, and problematically, defined in terms of an absence of human habitation and disturbance. From a global perspective

philosophers argue that purist definitions of "wilderness" lack relevance and usefulness for twenty-first century conditions. Mark Woods, for example, points out that J. Baird Callicott claims the term: "wilderness perpetuates a pre-Darwinian myth that we exist apart from nature" (354). Such purist ideology assumes people do not belong in wild areas and arguably that they are not part of the natural world. William Cronon notes the irony: "Far from being the one place on earth that stands apart from humanity, it [wilderness] is quite profoundly a human creation–indeed, the creation of very particular human cultures at very particular moments in human history" (1). Cronon observes this paradox in the concept of wilderness and further argues that this Western cultural construction "privileges some parts of nature at the expense of others" (8). Many contemporary notions of "wilderness" ideology retain inherent contradictions regarding the place of the human.

Depending on timeframes, dominant cultural paradigms and individual points-of-view, "wilderness" may evoke pristine rainforest, arid desert or just neglected wasteland. In the eighteenth century connotations of wilderness tended to be negative: "To be a wilderness then was to be 'deserted,' 'savage,' 'desolate,' 'barren'—in short, a 'waste,' the word's nearest synonym" (Cronon 1). Roslynn Haynes notes the Hebraic association of wilderness with The Fall and the redemptive potential of Edenic cultivation and agriculture: "In a tradition that built on this dichotomy, land had meaning only in terms of human use and history. The progress of civilisation depends on the taming of the wilderness," (*Seeking the Centre* 26). By the late nineteenth century environmental sensibilities had changed and wilderness areas were perceived as less threatening. Instead these areas became revered as opportunities for consolation and human spiritual restoration.

Several phases in literary and environmental history culminated in transformed notions of wilderness from "Satan's home" into "God's Own Temple"—the rise of the environmental movement in the USA, the influential work of writers like Henry David Thoreau, John Muir

and Aldo Leopold and the establishment of official national parks—were particularly significant (Cronon 2). The religious significance of wilderness was eventually sublimated into Romantic depictions manifested through Gothic and sublime aesthetics. Such cultural shifts are evident in postcolonial Tasmania as the fear and difficulties experienced by pioneers and settlers (often expressed through Gothic metaphors) were, to some degree, displaced by the Romantic sensibilities of affluent excursionists who, from the late nineteenth century, began to seek out the contradictory emotional response inherent in the "sublime experience." From the safety of recreational choice, the overwhelming beauty and vastness of mountains and skies inspired "*both* humbling fear *and* ennobling validation for the perceiving subject" (Hitt 606).

Seeking an experience of the sublime in wilderness includes recognition of its hazards. In Australia the challenging aspects of the land were often emphasised bringing into sharp relief the skills and endurance of the white "explorers." As Haynes notes, "Myths of national heroism demand an enemy and the land was readily sacrificed to that end" (*Seeking the Centre* 33). In Tasmania excursionists (usually educated white men from affluent backgrounds) seeking the ultimate sublime moment of individual domination over the nonhuman world were also able to showcase their survival skills against the often harsh natural elements.

Fear of being "taken" by a wild and harsh land frequently led to a common theme in early national mythology of European children being lost in the bush (Pierce, *Country of Lost Children* xii). In traditional European tales like the Grimm collections:

> the forests in which children were lost were perilous places, not because of any natural threats that they posed, but for the malevolent people who lived within them. Australian tellers of fairy stories, in the 1890s, necessarily writing with the Grimms in mind, naturalised the Germanic material earnestly, but often incongruously. They neither found, nor fabricated, plausible human threats to lost children. (Pierce, *Country of Lost Children* xv)

Such myths resonate in Tasmania's contemporary art and culture when depicted as a lost bushwalker, frequently a tourist who has ventured out alone and often ill-equipped. Cate Kennedy's narrative in *The World Beneath,* for example, is centred on a bushwalk and a lost white child under the care of an over-confident and ill-prepared parent.

The Western concept of wilderness, initially European and American ideas of wilderness, were imported into Australia. Derived from Eurocentric sensibilities, preconceived notions of landscape were embedded in white Australian representations. More recently, as a direct result of historical revisions and new ecological knowledge, traditional ideas have been challenged. In *The Biggest Estate on Earth* Bill Gammage alludes to the concept of "wilderness" as a socially constructed ideal. He suggests that *before* 1788 (the year of the arrival of the first fleet and establishment of the British colony at Sydney Cove), when the Indigenous people managed the land, "There was no wilderness. The Law—an ecological philosophy enforced by religious sanction—compelled people to care for all their country. People lived and died to ensure this" (2). Gammage argues convincingly that the Indigenous impact on the environment was far more systematic and widespread than is popularly realised. Gammage's findings regarding the extent of Aboriginal land management practices in Australia, should fuel Australian wilderness discourse. His research is significant for rereading historical representations of the Australian wilderness which generally depicted it as pristine ("untrammelled" by humans), and for informing contemporary and future ethical and aesthetic representations.

Indigenous land practices altered even the South West and Central Plateau regions of Tasmania where populations were relatively small. Evidence indicates many Indigenous fires were carefully planned and controlled through generations of skilled observation of weather patterns: "To decide what day, even what hour, to burn, managers took account of wind, humidity, aspect, target plants and animals, and fuel loads" (Gammage 169). Many burns were

started just before heavy rain or snow thus suggesting a natural restraint was anticipated by the Indigenous people (169). “Some doubt that Tasmanians lived in the southwest, but fire-promoted buttongrass covers more than 45 per cent of it, reflecting persistent burning on a scale which lightning strikes cannot explain” (Gammage 69). The Tasmanian Aborigines were hunters and gatherers and frequently travelled long distances in their search for food and ochre (Ryan 12). They also exercised proprietary rights over particular territories (the boundaries of which “coincided with well-marked geographical features like rivers, lagoons and mountain ranges”) and had regular camping spots which they returned to seasonally (Ryan 12–13). These patterns would seem to lead logically to Gammage’s assertion about the Australian landscape: “There is no wilderness” (2).

Aboriginal land contains valuable resource commodities. Furthermore, their land management practices conserved other rich natural resources that have been exploited by Western industries and enterprises. Marcia Langton points out that this level of anthropogenic management and occupation invalidates contemporary Western concepts of wilderness:

> Aboriginal land is targeted both by mining companies and conservation campaigners precisely because it is Aboriginal land. These vast areas owned by Aboriginal people are the repository of Australia’s megadiversity of fauna, flora and ecosystems because of the ancient Aboriginal system of management .... They are not wilderness areas. They are Aboriginal homelands, shaped over millennia by Aboriginal people. (2)

Langton’s national perspective is distilled into a Tasmania-specific context by Greg Lehman. Referring to the violence of dispossession and attempted genocide Lehman points out that “In Tasmania, an empty wilderness was created, and not found” (“Tasmanian Gothic” 205). He evocatively suggests that in current times the landscape “should be streaked with the smoke of a dozen campfires” (“Tasmanian Gothic” 205). Quoting Aboriginal Heritage officer Daryl

West, (about Tasmania) Lehman says, "This whole island is an Aboriginal site" ("Ancient Footsteps" 14).

Conventional ideas of wilderness, according to Mitchell Rolls, are of little relevance or usefulness in the light of twenty-first century knowledge, and he challenges the potentially eco-regressive mythology which represents Aborigines as traditional "conservationists":

> Whilst [it is] now generally accepted ... that almost all landscapes are a consequence of anthropogenic modification, the idea of a boutique natural realm free of meddlesome humankind persists. Where humans—such as Aborigines—are included, they appear in the guise of eco-environmentalists whose intimate bioregional knowledge enables them to tread lightly on the earth. (53)

Rolls' identification of misplaced assumptions about Indigenous people, as eco-environmentalists, resonates with comments from biologist Tim Low. Low recognises the eco-regressive potential of wilderness ideology which privileges popular areas over areas rich in biodiversity but lacking in sublime or picturesque qualities. He points out: "wilderness is not an ecological term … it stresse[s] freedom and challenge, not biodiversity. [It] was invented for people to enjoy. It was grounded in a selfish idea" (39). Influenced by American ideals and practices "modern ideas about wilderness in Australia date back to the walking clubs of Sydney" from the 1920s (Low 39). Low further explains that the idealised landscapes at the basis of much wilderness rhetoric, areas that are "big, remote and pristine," often miss more valuable areas for conservation. Areas of Tasmania exemplify this: "The glaciers that helped sculpt the Franklin's inspiring scenery also scraped away much of its biodiversity [while] hot spots for rare herbs include the rubbish tip at Tunbridge and the cemetery at Jericho" (Low 42).[18]

[18] Tunbridge and Jericho are historic villages in the midlands and Southern midlands (respectively), which were established in the early 1800s.

Despite archaeological and historical evidence of substantial Indigenous impact on the Tasmanian landscape most of my selected texts do not acknowledge or merely gesture towards Indigenous presence, perpetuating long-standing "silences." In literary and cinematic representations such "sins of omission" or "strategic silences" occur for a variety of reasons, not all of them conscious or explicable. Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin attribute a reluctance to acknowledge the Indigenous dispossession by European colonisers to "white settler anxiety" (82). They explain this term as "the crisis of belonging that accompanies split cultural allegiance, the historical awareness of expropriated territory, and the suppressed knowledge that the legal fiction of entitlement does not necessarily bring with it the emotional attachment that turns 'house and land' into home" (82). More recently, heightened community awareness of colonial and settler prejudices and preoccupations has led to political over-corrections and cultural misrepresentations about the relationship between the Indigenous inhabitants and the wilderness areas in Tasmania (see Rolls above). In this context, it could be argued that misrepresentation is no improvement on absence of representation.

Regardless of these postcolonial and ecological arguments which cast doubt on the relevance and usefulness of the concept of "wilderness," the word and concept is embedded in Tasmanian history and existing society. The Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service, Tourism Tasmania and the vast majority of environmental literature, public policy and community "conversations" generally continue to refer to the South-West and Central Plateau regions as "wilderness" (evidenced by the government Parks and Wildlife map included at the beginning of this thesis). A recent *Wilderness Photography* exhibition spent several months in both Launceston and Hobart public art galleries and there are several "wilderness shops" throughout the island offering a sophisticated range of outdoor equipment and excursions. Tasmania also has its own long-standing branch of the Australian Wilderness Society which promotes the protection of wilderness. Furthermore, the work of Gammage, Ryan, Langton, Rolls, and

Lehman, while well respected within higher education institutions, appears not to have filtered into Tasmania's general community.

Alternatively, perhaps political and pragmatic factional definitions have evolved to accommodate Indigenous activity within a "wilderness" concept. Most would agree that although the Indigenous impact on the land was extensive it had no equivalence in scale to modern industrialisation. Does Indigenous land management by fire or regular excursions into regions constitute sufficient disturbance to nullify the concept of wilderness? The recent definition below, by Haygarth, implies these activities do not:

> What is wilderness? The Australian Heritage Commission's [2013] National Wilderness Inventory uses four indicators as a basis by which to 'measure' the wilderness values of a place: remoteness from settlement; remoteness from access; apparent naturalness; and biophysical naturalness. That is, the quality of wilderness is determined by the degree to which it is 'remote from and undisturbed by the influence of modern technological society'. (12)

While it seems the Indigenous inhabitants' ecological shaping of the land does not constitute disturbance, enough to compromise the Australian Heritage Commission concept of wilderness, there are other controversies. Ideals of unspoilt wilderness are also at odds with darker moral tones concealed in the land's cultural layers. Some believe Tasmania's colonial history, not only in terms of Indigenous occupation and dispossession but also as a harsh penal colony developed through convict labour, leaves an enduring moral stain on the Tasmanian landscape. Such brutal regimes raise further contention about representing wilderness as pristine when areas of it have been the site of cruelties and inhuman conditions which are often associated with convict life. Ultimately, if historical Indigenous land management, colonial settlement and anthropogenic impact from tourism and global warming are factored into "wilderness" definitions even the remote South West and Central Plateau regions of Tasmania are left with

little “untrammelled” ground. Definitions and ideas about wilderness continue to evolve in accord with our understanding of the interdependent relationship between humans and the rest of the so-called natural world. Historically humans have been more, or less, part of the natural world depending on prevailing sensibilities. Gammage’s and Lehman’s arguments demonstrate the implications of the term “wilderness” for Indigenous occupation and colonial settlement in Tasmania.

Redesigned and recycled the concept of “wilderness” continues to serve human political and social purposes. In the late twentieth and twenty first centuries, the principal narrative timeframes in the texts for analysis, the impact of the anthropocene on the planet is startlingly evident through global warming and over-population. While over-population is not problematic for Tasmania, so far, unsustainable harvesting of natural resources and encroaching development, particularly infrastructure for ecotourism, is occurring. Wild areas remain sites of contestation in government policies. So-called “protected areas” can become a “shifting” line on a World Heritage Listing or National Parks map, a transitory boundary sometimes represented actually (and metaphorically) by a barbed wire fence threaded through dense bush.

The term “wild places” is replacing “wilderness” in some ecocritical discourse, especially in Britain. For contemporary Tasmania (and Australia) “wilderness” still prevails in academic literature, political and popular conversation and, most significantly in my selected texts. Consequently, I use the word “wilderness” provisionally and with the often contentious discourse I have outlined in mind.

Discussion of the concept of wilderness leads logically to one final, but vital point which is becoming increasingly undeniable: “Given persistent human impacts all over the planet, any wilderness that survives into the third millennium—however we define, value [represent] or protect it— will survive because we have chosen to allow it to survive” (Woods

359). Representation, both visual and literary has ethical implications for wilderness survival. [19] Disguising or denying pollution or vulnerable ecosystems under threat from anthropogenic activity in order to maintain a classic wilderness ideal is eco-regressive. Instead, acknowledging our interdependences with the rest of the natural world through ideas of primordial kinship, entanglement and shared materiality may inspire a sense of responsible action. As Jordan Fisher-Smith reminds us, much of the world is a mixture of wild and anthropogenic, and: "While it may be true that human effects are everywhere, it is a matter of degree, and we are now at a critical juncture in history when we must take great pains to ensure the survival of those landscapes and species that have not already been massively manipulated" (186, 88). Despite being socially constructed, representations of "wilderness" ultimately refer to an actual physical space which requires acknowledgment. Furthermore, beyond "the default genre" of mimesis, literary artifice (metaphor, myth and magic realism for example) can also effectively deliver verisimilitude (Belsey 55). Works of fiction, through affective narration, can disrupt complacency by revealing wilderness degradation. In turn, while simultaneously providing reading pleasure, such confrontation may encourage people to care enough to change behaviours.

"A Fractured Aesthetic"

In accord with Belsey I do not equate the pleasure of a particular reading experience with ideas of aesthetic value that fundamentally rest on "*judgements* of *taste*" (9). My interest in aesthetic representation in the texts is its effectiveness to reflect the ethical complexity and plural perspectives which inform human relationships with wilderness. As highlighted in the

[19] Rothenberg warns us of the potential impact of our choice of aesthetic representation: "We in the grip of the commercialization of nature had best be extra careful about what we imagine wilderness to mean, and what we use the concept to demonstrate" (*Wild Ideas* xviii).

Introduction, a fractured aesthetic often occurs from an ambivalence (consciously or unconsciously by the artist) towards subjects. Multiple perspectives may be written into the work by authors or read into the work by ecocritics or general readers. Alternate perspectives can by linked to achieve an integrated vision, but when Tasmanian wilderness is the subject of representation these visions do not always synthesise and awkward ethical and stylistic tensions may remain.

In order to fully explore the concept of a fractured aesthetic, I draw on useful analogies between landscape painting, still photography and literary and cinematic works. Tracing changing sensibilities through early artwork reveals fascinating parallels and shifts between landscape painting and literary representations of the penal colonies of New South Wales and Tasmania. Many of the early colonial landscape painters artfully shaped their scenes through light, perspective, detail and the positioning of the human in relation to the environment. In the *Lie of the Land* (1996) Paul Carter provides a fascinating analysis of "cloud grammar:"

> If clear and settled skies were associated with Progress, with political order and clear-sightedness, then storms signified the breakdown of order and rebellion. … Stormy weather precipitated the breakdown of character. Social divisions grew ragged and haemorrhaged. … The accumulation of clouds aroused superstitious fear, raised questions about power and control. It reminded the settlers of their vulnerability and nakedness. It was like a return of the primitive. (262–63)

From a contemporary ecocritical point-of-view, Carter's analysis is startlingly devoid of any reference to the actual ecological or physical effects the clouds may have on the environment. His interpretation of the diversity of cloud images within colonial encounters demonstrates a double vision through Gothic and Romantic aesthetics within a postcolonial context.

The legacy of colonialism generally, and the Black Wars specifically, pervades representations, both visual and literary, of Tasmania's multi-layered environmental history.

Lehman asserts Tasmania's invasion by white settlers came out of "an eternity of war" experienced by Europeans ("Tasmanian Gothic" 211). Benjamin Duterrau's early colonial painting *The Conciliation,* which represents a treaty between George Augustus Robinson and the last Tasmanian Aborigines, is a particular example of a universal theme of conquest and conciliation. Duterrau idealises Robinson as a Christ-like protector but from an Indigenous perspective the painting depicted a "hollow treaty" with tragic consequences. History reveals the betrayal of the Indigenous people by the British government, and this knowledge embeds Gothic elements of the eternal battle between good and evil "into the mythology of Tasmanian wilderness" (Lehman "Tasmanian Gothic" 211). Lehman also points out that such double vision, in contemporary readings of *The Conciliation*, fractures Duterrau's European aesthetic derived from the ideology of conciliation and: "shifts the Aboriginal nations of Tasmania from anthropological curiosity to players on the world's stage—with the same international rights to justice" ("Tasmanian Gothic" 211). A *leitmotif* of grief and loss (referred to as an "aesthetic of melancholy" by Lehman and Ian McLean) similarly underpins several of the fictional representations of the wilderness regions I examine. As Lehman observes:

> Long before Marcus Clarke's novel *For the Term of His Natural Life* (1874), or films such as *The Tale of Ruby Rose* (1988) or *The Hunter* (2011), Benjamin Duterrau scripted the first chapter of Tasmanian Gothic. This story is reiterated with every acknowledgment of Tasmania's other great tragedies: the thylacine, Lake Pedder, and the ongoing struggle to save its ancient forests. All of these form powerful mythic characters that engage an international imagination, and resonate with a diversity of unresolved and self-inflicted sins across the globe. ("Tasmanian Gothic" 211)

Lehman's comments regarding the global relevance of Tasmanian "tragedies" are especially poignant given they refer specifically to two texts analysed in this thesis—*Ruby Rose* and *The Hunter* (film)—both of which experienced greater levels of global than local success. *Ruby*

Rose received accolades at Cannes Film Festival but only a very limited arthouse response in Tasmania (see Chapter Two). *The Hunter* (novel and film) were not popular in Tasmania but received many positive reviews internationally (see Chapters Seven and Eight respectively).

Ian McLean's considerations of colonial landscape painting provide points of departure for my own work. As McLean explains, the cultivated European picturesque depicts human enterprise, like farming, as existing in accord with an ordered natural world. In English landscape paintings the lacunae between the frontiers of civilisation and "wilderness" (or woods and forests) are represented by fences, rustic carts, farmers' cottages and farmyard animals, all of which serve to synthesise in "dialectical unison" the split between nature and culture (McLean 151–53). In Van Diemen's Land, however, the separation between culture and nature was more "binary in pattern" and was not so easily reconciled (McLean 152). A "lack of [complementary] middle ground" was problematic for representations of Australia's environment (32). Tensions between neo-classical buildings symbolising colonial domination and sublime wilderness were superficially resolved by a sometimes disturbing "colonial picturesque" (McLean 152). Jim Davidson, in his discussion of the Tasmanian Gothic aesthetic, also detects this tension when he refers to "odd juxtapositions" which "may seem to sustain neo-Georgian notions of gentility," while also having "a wonderful way of sabotaging them" (310). A fractured aesthetic is apparent when representations of familiar Arcadian *locus amoenus* of European picturesque are disrupted by Gothic images of Aborigines and "foreign" fauna and flora. Similarly evidence of environmental degradation from human activity disrupts conventional Romantic sublime representation and wilderness tropes generally, to create a different kind of fractured aesthetic in the texts examined here.

McLean outlines evidence of such dislocation and tension in a study of tree images and notes that while many British artists merely "domesticated" the eucalypts into more familiar shapes John Glover devised a unique approach for his representation of Van Diemen's Land

(McLean 154–56). In an attempt to portray this fractured aesthetic common to the colonial picturesque, rather than combining this in one picture as traditional artists did, Glover's solution was to create two separate sets of paintings. Categorised by historian Tim Bonyhady as Aboriginal and Pastoral Arcadias respectively, "One group depict[ed] Aborigines before invasion, the other show[ed] the pastoral wealth of a settled land without Aborigines" (McLean 153). McLean also suggests Glover's "Aboriginal Arcadias were not always as benign as Bonyhady supposes" and that the artist utilises the double discourse to "smooth over the fractured pictorial space" (154). As a landowner Glover "wanted to picture a genealogy of power in the landscape" and thus when depicting Englishmen near the gum trees Glover gave the native species an "oak-like grandeur," (Mclean 154–56). When his work featured Aborigines in the landscape, however, the trees were represented as Gothic with snake-like limbs evoking primitive spirits (McLean 154–56). McLean argues that "Glover's sinuous curvilinear trees have a moral and allegorical intent, and cannot be dismissed as distracting mannerisms. Their forms are the result of a deliberate and purposeful aesthetic which is integral to the meaning (and beauty) of his work" (154). As Mclean points out, however, there is ambivalence in Glover's Aboriginal Arcadias. Glover generally adopted "the grotesque conventions of the day" to represent Aborigines but he sometimes "combined this with wild Romantic Edenic settings" evoking a paradise lost (McLean 155). The resulting effect introduces a note of empathy into an otherwise Gothic portrayal of the Tasmanian Aborigines. McLean regards Glover's inability to achieve the ideal picturesque as the artist's distinguishing feature: "In Tasmania his picturesque aesthetic wavered, producing an ambivalence and uncertainty typical of melancholy. Glover's failure was, for most of the century, the norm of Australian art" (157). Mclean's conceptualisation of a fractured aesthetic in Glover's work has relevance for contemporary imaginative representation of the Tasmanian wilderness in later literature and film.

While McLean's notion of a fractured aesthetic refers to representations (or absence) of Aborigines in the colonial landscape I apply the concept to the contemporary representation (or absence thereof) of anthropogenic degradation of vulnerable wilderness. The divisions and points of intersection between contemporary ecological aesthetics and traditional aesthetics in writing and filmmaking are at the centre of my analysis. By traditional aesthetics I refer to pastoral, picturesque, sublime, Gothic and Romantic tropes. By "contemporary ecological aesthetics" I refer to realistic/naturalistic representations which avoid anthropomorphising and sentimentality. Clouds, for example, are not just culturally constructed metaphors for human cognitive functions, as they are in the examples that Carter gives. A contemporary ecological aesthetic depicts their physical presence as actual weather and ecocriticism highlights and evaluates this actual (as opposed to socially constructed) existence. An ecological aesthetic strives towards material representation of Tasmanian wilderness which incorporates wildlife habitat, biodiversity value, and remnants of extraction industry activity including mining pollution and landscape damage from deforestation (see cover page photograph by Isla MacGregor). Most significant, for my concept of a contemporary ecological aesthetic, is the representation of the vulnerability of wilderness ecology, especially from human activity, which can be achieved, partially, through reinterpreting the sublime (discussed below).

Authors and filmmakers adopt similar methods to landscape painters, albeit different mediums, to *construct* their imaginative representations. While some textual representations remain clearly within the aesthetic style of Gothic, Romantic or ecological/naturalist, others incorporate several styles within the one text. It should be noted that different and contrasting aesthetic styles, even within the one text, do not necessarily undermine the integrity of environmental representation either aesthetically or ethically. They have potential to enhance understanding by reflecting community and landscape diversity. A particular point of interest for my analysis is considering whether aesthetic combinations achieve an enriching synthesis

or an awkward tension. Most significantly, I consider whether these alternating styles suggest conflicting ethical responses within the overall portrayal of contemporary environmental issues in the context of the imaginative work.

Aesthetic and ethical tensions continue to inform imaginative representations of the Australian environment and its concomitant critical analyses. Haynes reminds us that "the landscape we observe is a cultural construct" and discusses the psychological parallels for immigrant populations of the twentieth century when confronted with Australian desert (and by extension wilderness generally) (*Seeking the Centre* 3). Derived from cultural constructions premised on binary patterns of country/city, rural/urban, nature/society and freedom/exile these dualities inform Australian "national myths" which are sometimes not in accord with contemporary ecological realities, especially in Tasmania (Turner 32). As an ecocritic, rather than focus on the social and linguistic construction of ideas about the natural world, I emphasise its material representation. In accord with this fundamental approach my examination of Gothic, Romantic, pastoral and mythological representation brings into relief more naturalistic ecological depictions of the Tasmanian wilderness. The result is a variety of expressions of a fractured aesthetic which create a useful framework for the textual analysis.

A fracture in the conventional sublime aesthetic is becoming apparent as changing attitudes create opportunities to learn new ways to relate to the nonhuman world. Christopher Hitt argues convincingly for "an ecological sublime" … "based on a new kind of transcendence which would resist the traditional reinscription of humankind's supremacy over nature" (611). Hitt's argument offers some significant correspondences with my analysis of the selected texts. His concept of "an ecological sublime" includes the recognition that, despite increasing technology, in the final response phase, nature is beyond human control and this knowledge revives a sense of humility evoked by the conventional sublime. Instead of moving to the final phase of domination of the nonhuman world (as in conventional sublime responses) Hitt

suggests that human beings are realising the environment and other life forms as an extended self and that "to harm nature is to harm ourselves" (613).[20] Hitt also introduces a "fracture" into the idea of the new sublime when he suggests it can be "evoked not by natural objects but by their devastation" and suggests that "the threat of ecocatastrophe could be a new version of the sublime" (619). In other words, an "ecological sublime" can evoke feelings of kinship and shared materiality but also horror at our capacity for destruction.

Contradictions within contemporary concepts of the sublime aesthetic are also explored by Jennifer Peeples. Examining photographic images of toxins, Peebles considers the inherent tensions between aesthetically beautiful images used as a means to convey the ethical "ugliness" of environmental pollution. Peeples notes that "the tensions found in toxic sublime images mirror greater environmental tensions" and suggests a productive extension of her work "would be to examine whether these tensions also group themselves together in other environmental images, in written and spoken environmental discourse" (388). My textual analysis takes up Peeples' challenge by exploring ideas related to the toxic sublime in literature.

Ambiguity from competing and contradictory interpretations evokes a fractured aesthetic which is apparent in "Smelterscape" by Isla Macgregor the cover photograph of this thesis. "Smelterscape" is part of an exhibition, *Entropy 1*, and visually parallels my notion of a fractured aesthetic. MacGregor explains that her work is not just documentary photography and that, for her, there is "a high level of …" 'aesthetic engagement"' (Boylan 2). There clearly

[20] Hitt argues that this stage of human dominion over the nonhuman does not have to be "the final stage" of "sublime representations of nature" (608–09). The work of William Wordsworth, John Keats or John Clare, for example, demonstrates, to varying degrees, a sense of humility towards and immersion/integration with nature. See "Pioneers and The Romantic Legacy" in the Introduction.

is a superficial aesthetic synthesising of colour, texture and composition which overlays a sense of melancholy and loss. The image evokes ambivalence as the Gothic ageing smelter evokes empathy, of sorts, through its literal decay into the landscape. Metaphorically, further loss is evoked by the rusting relic's association with the end of a thriving mining community. Simultaneously environmental degradation is also signalled by the lack of wilderness forests and the flayed mountains in the background, and the barren, polluted earth in the foreground surrounding the smelter.

In contrast to Glover, who used two separate sets of representation (Aboriginal and Pastoral arcadias), MacGregor captures the double discourse of wilderness and extractive industrial degradation within one photograph. Several of the texts I analyse also reveal the ravaged landscape beneath Tasmania's glossy tourist image. Like MacGregor, authors including Richard Flanagan, Cate Kennedy and Cameron Hindrum expose (and at times utilise) Romanticised depictions and/or employ Gothic metaphors. These authors rarely render the environment threatening (as in conventional Gothic tropes) but instead portray humanity as the negative energy creating tension and ecological disorder.

To recapitulate, Jim Davidson argues for the Gothic aesthetic as a synthesising vision because it "can accommodate disjunctions between past and present" resulting in an "uncommonly picturesque" representation. McLean holds that the disjuncture between nature and culture cannot be easily overcome in the Tasmanian landscape and that "a fractured aesthetic emerged—a colonial picturesque" (Davidson 310; McLean 152). (I will return to these points in the following chapter). Potential aesthetic synthesis or tension, characterise their positions respectively, and are relevant for my own concept of a fractured aesthetic because they offer a parallel contextual argument. Davidson and McLean have the issue of Indigenous invisibility primarily in mind when they discuss the difficulties of achieving a picturesque representation of the Tasmanian wilderness. My focus, however, is on the absence, coexistence

and subsequent ethical implications of the often fractured representations of anthropogenic wilderness destruction in the selected texts. The example of MacGregors's photograph provides a visual touchstone for my textual analysis. Can traditional aesthetics (Gothic and Romantic) synthesise with contemporary ecological representations into a credible, ethically integral whole or is the result always, or only sometimes, an awkward tension?

CHAPTER TWO:

"Tasmanian Gothic" and Emergent Ecological Dialogue in *The Tale of Ruby Rose*

"Gothic extremity in a place like central Tasmania is made to seem like second nature"

(Jim Davidson 321)

Historically representations of the Tasmanian wilderness in literature and film typically interpret the place as a Gothic space where monstrous colonial and postcolonial violence forms part of the regional symbolism. Recent films like those depicting the journey of notorious escaped convict Alexander Pearce still evoke the melancholic, threatening and haunted atmosphere associated with a Gothic aesthetic which is entrenched in imaginative representations of South-West Tasmania.[21] However, as Jane Stadler argues: "Tasmania is a living place that cannot be reduced to a metaphor for colonial prisons and the symbolic use of the land as a screen on which to project the protagonist's psychic state is not the only way to interpret cinematic landscapes" ("Mapping" 19). In accord with Stadler's argument for the material reality of the Tasmanian landscape, my reading of imaginative representations of Tasmania's wilderness, in Roger Scholes' *The Tale of Ruby Rose* (1987), explores traditional "Tasmanian Gothic" interpretations but also reveals some emerging contemporary ecological dialogue. [22]

How was *Ruby Rose* received and interpreted by critics and the public, both local and international? To put it in context, this film was released just four years after the Franklin River

[21] *The Last Confessions of Alexander Pearce* (2008), *Dying Breed* (2008) and *Van Diemen's Land* (2009) all portray the Tasmanian landscape through Gothic conventions.

[22] 1987 is the release date for the Venice Film Festival. If sources cite 1988 they are referring to the movie's release date in Australia and the U.S.A.

campaign victory which positioned Tasmanian wilderness areas in the international spotlight. "The film received a five-minute standing ovation at the Venice Film Festival ... yet distribution in Australia was difficult. A local distributor declined to release the film" and eventually the Wilderness Society underwrote the distribution costs which suggests that those already advocates of wilderness conservation viewed it as significant for their cause (Byrnes 3). The enthusiastic international film festival reception in Venice was based less on ethical concerns relating to environmental activism or postcolonial insights, and more on its aesthetic value as a Gothic genre success: "people in Europe can recognise a Gothic masterpiece when they see one; but here there is a reluctance to confront extremity in personality as well as in uncompromising landscapes" (J. Davidson 322). Nationally and locally reviews tended to focus on the physical hardships endured by the cast and crew during the winter filming or on the magnificent visual effects of the cinematography. Over the last twenty-five years the film's reputation has grown and it was recently restored by the National Film and Sound Archive (Byrnes). Despite these developments *Ruby Rose* has never achieved "box-office success" and remains a relatively unknown production beyond arthouse audiences (Thomas 49).

The revival of the Gothic aesthetic occurred during the mid-eighteenth-century as part of the Romantic movement.[23] However, the Gothic movement, retained the darker, more threatening elements of the natural world, and emphasised the primitive terror often evoked by natural features like storms, rugged mountains, dense forests and freezing wastelands. Gothic stereotypes persist and the genre is popular, even in the twenty-first century, especially in representations of Tasmania's wilderness.

[23] See sub-section 'Pioneers and The Romantic Legacy' under the Introduction for context relating to the Romantic Movement.

An interest in Gothic tropes and their impact on environmental representations constitutes a recent shift in ecocritical attention. Both *Ruby Rose* and Daniel Nettheim's 2011 film *The Hunter* (the text analysed in Chapter Eight), employ Gothic aesthetics. While traditional Gothic tropes dominate the earlier film they are residual in the latter. Despite a Gothic aesthetic, typical representations of the Tasmanian wilderness, that include convicts, cannibalism and actual Aboriginal characters, are absent from both films. While such exclusions may seem logical (given the earliest narrative timeframe is 1933) these subjects frequently manifest in contemporary literature and film set in the Tasmanian wilderness through "absent" and spectral characters.[24] Nevertheless both films use Gothic symbolism, which I interpret in different ways, to engage with ecocritical ideas.

Cool temperate Tasmania, particularly the Central Highlands area where *Ruby Rose* is filmed, differs markedly from the iconic Australian outback. Representation of Tasmanian wilderness becomes particularly complex and challenging because Australian symbols and myths, derived from the desert outback, lack resonance when applied to the misty rainforests, buttongrass plains and alpine peaks that form the setting for *Ruby Rose*. Moreover, a modified version of European Gothic actually facilitates many imaginative representations of the Tasmanian landscape.

Replete with material for Gothic aesthetic conventions, "Tasmania is a particular location that has been constructed as a Gothic site" partly because of its topography and climate and partly due to aspects of its colonial history (Rudd 119). Initially a penal colony, settlement of the island also involved brutal conflict with its Indigenous population. "Tasmanian Gothic

[24] In the case of the Aborigines however, their historical presence is apparent through their land-management practice of firestick farming and the resulting distinctive buttongrass plains which form part of Tasmania's wilderness.

is a recognized sub-genre of Australian literature that 'expresses the sense of Tasmania's peculiar "otherness" in relation to the mainland, as a remote, mysterious and self-enclosed space … "backward," out of step with civilization'" (Rudd 119–20). [25]

For Jim Davidson, in 1989, "a Gothic Tasmania proves to be a synthesising vision, since it can accommodate disjunctions between past and present, even thriving on them, settling them down in a common landscape" (310). He regards the common wilderness landscape sought by contemporary environmentalists and Gothic novelists as the connecting link in what he refers to as the "uncommonly picturesque" (310). Davidson argues that the Gothic aesthetic, when applied to the timeless quality of the ancient "crags and the Splits, of a myriad of sudden lakes, or the wonderfully overwrought coastline of [the] Tasman Peninsula" synthesises competing aesthetics. (310). But, in so doing, I argue, such aesthetic synthesising between conservationists' Romantic visions and Gothic novelists' desire for extreme landscapes does not lead to eco-progressive representations of the Tasmanian wilderness. Both visions are anthropocentric because the intrinsic value of the environment remains unacknowledged. Davidson's "uncommonly picturesque" representation is sometimes fractured by ethical tensions. McLean, on the other hand, asserts that the traditional binary pattern of representation of culture and nature in Tasmania is not so easily reconciled and rather results in a fractured aesthetic. The "fractures" I focus on in my analyses of *Ruby Rose* are divisions between traditional imaginative representations, that is, the Gothic and Romantic aesthetics (which I treat as aligned) and those which adopt a more contemporary ecological aesthetic.

[25] Elizabeth Leane notes that Tasmanian wilderness functions in much the same way as Antarctica "as a literal underworld, it suggests the monstrous, the infernal, the Satanic. … William Lenz has gone so far as to identify a category termed the 'Antarctic Gothic'" (Antarctica 59).

In *Ruby Rose* Tasmania's violent past and "nature tourism" aesthetic are represented through Gothic and Romantic portrayals of sublime mountain vistas. Theoretical work on the concept of the sublime by Fred Botting is particularly relevant to the Tasmanian wilderness landscape. He explains how "the imaginary quality of the sublime allows for both terror and pleasure" (7). Botting draws from English philosopher, Edmund Burke to discuss "the apparently contradictory effects of the sublime in terms of the way it combined delight and horror, pleasure and terror" (7). Potentially threatening wilderness elements, for example, craggy mountain peaks, can be kept at an affective distance through Gothic and Romantic aesthetics. Initial emotions such as fear can be experienced momentarily but then displaced by reverence and pleasure. Related to the beautiful by both Burke and Immanuel Kant, it was Kant who made the distinction which associates the sublime with material qualities of nature. Devoid of artist or author the removal of creative intent leaves an entirely un-orchestrated and subjective experience of wilderness for individual viewers. Such neutrality or "absence" of intent changes however, when cinematographers, directors and authors manipulate the sublime imaginatively through aesthetics like the Gothic and/or Romantic. Traditional depictions occasionally intersect, awkwardly at times, with more contemporary ecological (or toxic sublime) representations of biodiversity loss, wildlife habitat destruction, natural resource industry practices and wilderness conservation. Resulting ethical tensions contribute to a peculiarly contemporary fractured aesthetic evident in *Ruby Rose*.

Set and filmed around the Walls of Jerusalem in Tasmania's Central Highlands, *Ruby Rose* represents many of the anomalies inherent in Romantic and Gothic representations of the region. The film conveys a superficial level of aesthetic synthesis (as in MacGregor's "Smelterscape") but these anomalies do not resolve into "dialectical unison" through the cinematic narrative and character exposition (McLean 152). Although the character of Ruby has a degree of affinity with her wilderness environment, her emotional turmoil (manifested in

nightmares and superstition) and her dominating husband Henry represent the traditional binary patterns of humans against nature perpetuated through Gothic images and atmosphere. More significantly, for my thesis, *Ruby Rose* demonstrates considerably more conventionally Gothic representations of topographical features than the other texts chosen for analysis. Consequently, *Ruby Rose* facilitates a contrasting point of departure for the more contemporary texts.

The early twentieth-century timeframe and the remote highland setting in *Ruby Rose* create interesting tensions for contemporary audiences. Dramatic scenes of mountain peaks appearing and disappearing in the mists evoke contrasting moods of Gothic terror and the Romantic sublime. While this setting may inspire local bushwalkers and contemporary ecotourists with its wild beauty for many it remains threatening and desolate. Critics emphasise the role of the wilderness landscape in *Ruby Rose*. Jim Davidson suggests: "the shaping presence throughout [*Ruby Rose*] is the mountains, with their aloofness, fleeting beauties and changing moods. They—and the Gothic weather—set the terms of the lives of the main characters" in the film (319). Stephen Thomas claims that in *Ruby Rose* "the Tasmanian landscape is a character in its own right, conspiratorial one minute, benign the next" (49). These alternating representations of the wilderness orient my ecocritical analysis of the film.

Ruby, her husband Henry and their adopted son Jem live in a rough timber hut in the mountains. Their living is earned from trapping and snaring wildlife. Ruby has had little human contact but retains some memories of her father. Superstitious rituals allay her anxieties from a repressed childhood trauma and an unexpressed grief for her own stillborn child. The intensity of her emotional needs remains unrecognised by her male companions. To resolve her fears, she is compelled to undertake a hazardous journey alone across the mountains. Reaching her hometown Ruby reconnects briefly with her grandmother which affords some emotional healing before they are separated again. Ruby meets her father and he reveals the catalyst for her fear of darkness. With renewed strength, both emotional and physical, Ruby begins her trek

back through the mountains but misfortune overtakes her. Ultimately, at the point of hypothermia, she is rescued by Henry and Jem and stretchered home.

Ruby Rose is significant for the Tasmanian film industry for two reasons in particular: it is one of the few movies shot on location in the remote Walls of Jerusalem national park, and "it was the first original Tasmanian screenplay onto the screen" (Thomas 50). Filming on location in the Central Highlands and under extreme conditions for the cast and crew is unusual: many films set in Tasmanian wilderness "displace or substitute Tasmanian landmarks" (Stadler, "Mapping" 14). *Dying Breed* for example, substitutes Victoria's Dandenong Ranges and parts of Gippsland in some sequences. Convict actors (cast from a local Search and Rescue team) in *Van Diemen's Land* found it impossible to run through the dense undergrowth of Tasmania's South West and these scenes were filmed in the forests of Otway, in Victoria (Stadler, "Mapping" 14). As Stadler notes, filmmakers in general and those shooting *Ruby Rose* struggle: "with the darkness of the Tasmanian landscape in more than metaphorical terms. Thick vegetation, unpredictable weather, and the challenges of maintaining continuity when clouds scuttle across the sun make location shooting expensive and exhausting" ("Mapping" 14). In keeping with ecocritical discourse Stadler's comments serve as reminders of the physical and ecological elements of the "referent", that is, the wilderness itself, from a position of merely aesthetic backdrop used to enhance the human drama. Nevertheless, the wilderness has a leading role in *Ruby Rose* in terms of the film's narrative and also in terms of the director's pragmatic decisions relating to production logistics and economics. The weather patterns and rugged terrain not only dominate the film's narrative but also the logistics of the film-making itself.

Articles and reviews about *Ruby Rose* appear to devote almost as much space to the hardship and practical difficulties of making the film as they do to discussing the final product. Filming was in winter and the crew erected a campsite of prefabricated huts for fifty people in

the surrounding wilderness. “For much of the six-week shoot the crew were isolated” because extreme weather prevented the planned helicopter supply drops (Byrnes 3). Actor Chris Haywood (Henry) relates his experience: “When we got there, there was no food and no cook, nothing. So we were snaring and eating wallabies” (qtd. in Byrnes 3). [26] For audiences and reviewers aware of the living and working conditions of the cast and crew the characteristics of the film’s wilderness setting are likely to be intensified through this emphasis on production challenges. While the narrative and characters are disclaimed as fiction *Ruby Rose* is “filmed entirely on location” (Scholes, *Ruby Rose* credits).

The dominant threatening mood of *Ruby Rose* draws heavily from the Gothic tradition. Numerous Gothic conventions feature in the narrative: the scenario of the heroine undertaking a dangerous journey without male protection; the undisclosed trauma which caused Ruby’s fear of the dark; the shocked encounter with the grotesque Mr Bennett and his eventual corpse. Of specific interest is the way Scholes represents the natural world—the climate, topography and wildlife of Tasmania’s Central Highlands region—to create a Gothic mood.

From the beginning, while the film title is still running, a rapid montage of Gothic symbols plays behind it: the deep shadows in the hut reveal flashes of primitive disturbed drawings from Ruby’s scrapbook; she is startled out of a nightmare claiming “something touched me in the dark” and a close-up of a raven *doppelgänger*, the native black currawong, appears monstrous as its image fills the screen. The camera pauses momentarily on the bird’s sharp eyes and beak but quickly cuts to an aerial view of jagged mountain peaks which range into the distance devoid of any sign of life, human or otherwise. From the opening scenes nature

[26] *Ruby Rose* was made in 1986–87 which predates the prohibition of snaring and trapping. See the Animal Welfare Act 1993—Section 12. Traps. in *Tasmanian Consolidated Acts*. http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/tas/consol_act/

is portrayed as hostile, malevolent and threatening. Mist and approaching darkness begin to obscure the natural world while inside the hut wood-smoke wafts and swirls from the hearth metaphorically suggesting Ruby's unknown family secrets and her anxieties derived from perceived "signs" from the supernatural world. In addition, the use of colour in the visuals is so sparse the overall effect is one of black and white. Heavy shadows absorb the light, both in the huts and outside rendering the landscape colourless. The resulting monochromatic effect is relieved only by occasional ribbons of insipid blue sky and a few warm tones of muted pink or titian from dyed clothing.

These hard-edged visuals are enhanced as the vast wildness and isolation of the region is reflected by the soundtrack. The unsettling score of Paul Schutze is intensified during the search for Ruby by the ethereal strains of a soprano piercing the silent, now snow-covered landscape. Later scenes with a gramophone player, framed against this backdrop of desolate white-on-black vistas, are surreal in their juxtaposition of technology and primal terrain. The overall aesthetic in *Ruby Rose* is achieved by a combination of setting, music, narrative and characterisation but it is Scholes representation of the wilderness itself which orchestrates the Gothic keynote.

A Romantic aesthetic is apparent at times through the stylistics of the cinematography but the narrative itself does not deliver any sustained Romantic representation of wilderness as the natural elements continue to challenge the characters' survival. At times audiences are simultaneously absorbing images of sublime panoramic views and micro-scenes of Ruby, Henry and Jem scraping their living from an unyielding environment. While the Gothic aesthetic prevails overall, there are examples, I argue, of emergent ecological dialogue as in the following scenario. Ruby and her family rely on the income from possum and wallaby pelts as trade for provisions from the lowland town of Bothwell. The early scenes in the film represent the snared wildlife or their carcasses in a matter-of-fact, naturalistic style similar to

that in documentaries featuring animal predators. Scholes avoids sentimental or anthropomorphic portrayal of fauna, in reality it would not be credible for the characters who rely on game for their livelihood. Yet, deviation from traditional "ethics" of hunting are highlighted in these early scenes when Henry deftly skins a wallaby, and then throws the whole carcass on a decomposing pile of others behind a fallen log. Such exploitation infringes hunting codes related to "wanton waste" designed to respect animals (and harvested natural resources in general) by using everything possible from the material "life" they have given. Already the ethical complexities of human entanglement with the rest of the natural world and its representation are emerging.

Scholes develops the ethical tension through conflict between the two men. For gentle Jem, who makes a pet of their goat, animal killing is distressing and this may seem to contradict my earlier point about sentimentality. Jem retains his integrity because despite his reluctance to kill he is not squeamish at the practicalities of skinning possums and wallabies once they are dead. To avoid killing the sensitive adolescent deliberately fouls the wallaby snares. Ultimately, he is forced to comply because he fears Henry who views trapping as a necessary function and scans the landscape for every opportunity. Jim Davidson argues that in *Ruby Rose*, "Predatory violence regulates the harsh ecology; it is so functional it almost seems casual" (319). But is Henry actually exploiting the environment by trapping the wildlife if the ultimate reason is to subsist and buy supplies for his family? It could be argued that as part of the natural world he has as much right to be predatory as the other animals. But Scholes does not represent it in this way. Early in the film when Henry sets off to check his snares Ruby says, through a haunting interior monologue, "You are like an animal on your way to feed," but her tone suggests contempt rather than admiration. Henry is not represented as a part of the natural world but rather as a "conqueror" with a desire to acquire a surplus beyond his family's basic needs. His desire for an ambitiously designed home which can stable stock underneath exemplifies his

dissatisfaction. Henry claims his building plans are motivated by a desire to improve his family's living conditions. His selfishness is apparent though as he sidelines Ruby's welfare by ignoring her repeated requests to improve their primitive outhouse/lavatory. Trapping more and more animals provides currency for the materials for his new building. There is further evidence of "waste" as many skins are rejected after Ruby neglects to cure them properly and they become maggot-infested. While this incident provokes an angry reaction from Henry his concern is with not with the "wasted" death of the animal but with Ruby's neglect and his own loss of profit. When analytical focus is on the drama of Ruby and Henry's relationship, or the narrative of the film (as in traditional critical approaches), these ecocentric considerations often remain as seemingly trivial background detail. Ecocriticism's main purpose, however, is to bring these background representations of wilderness and nonhuman species, and the concomitant tensions between culture and nature, to the forefront of critical analysis. In contrast to conventional Gothic aesthetics where humans are threatened by "nature," often in the form of darkness, forests and wild animals, Scholes' trapping scenes in *Ruby Rose* constitute emerging ecological dialogue by highlighting human exploitation of nonhuman Others.

Gothic "landscapes stress isolation and wilderness, evoking vulnerability, exposure and insecurity" and, on the whole, *Ruby Rose* conforms to this style (Botting 4). In keeping with Gothic conventions "nature is also divided between domesticated and dangerous forms" but in *Ruby Rose* this separation is more complex (Botting 4). There are fleeting picturesque scenes in Scholes representation of the wilderness—on the slopes below the peaks—weathered timber huts, a border-collie and kennel, a stabled goat, a tethered cow, a chicken shed and the muddy enclosure which is Ruby's vegetable garden. Filmed in transient sunshine the environment appears benign and such rural "props" not extraordinary, but in the typical Gothic weather patterns of the area such domesticity is discordant. These diverse representations of the region are not synthesised into "dialectical unison" and this is one of the sources of tension in the film

(McLean 152). There is no effective fencing or even boundary line dividing the *faux*-pastoral from the wild and the two remain entangled. While this resists conventional binaries it does not achieve any sense of synthesis either. This "fracture" between the Gothic and picturesque aesthetic captures a more authentic experience of life in the Central Highlands in 1933 because it presents competing regimes of representation without resolution. In contrast to traditional European picturesque where synthesis between the domestic and the wild is achieved, in this Tasmanian region they remain discordant. In other words, style reflects and reinforces content—life in the Central Highlands for Ruby and her family was an enduring challenge against the elemental forces of nature.

A Welsh immigrant, Henry is at home with harsh mountain weather and a rough wool jacket and felt hat, typical of bushmen of the time, are his only protection against the bleak conditions. Henry learned stock management techniques from the Welsh mountain shepherds but these practices are unknown to the Tasmanian locals used to running stock on the lowland plains. Consequently, his plan to construct a European style house with a stable underneath on a nearby escarpment is viewed by the locals with scepticism. Is Henry's dream house credible, can he really adapt and flourish in the wilderness or is local scepticism based more on generations of wise experience than naïvety? Scholes does not resolve this during the course of the narrative but Henry's image remains unforgettable as he balances on the timber framework of the first wall of construction. A human form diminutive against a backdrop of rugged dolerite peaks and endless sky, ironically, Henry becomes a powerful image of "man *against* nature."

Long-exiled from his native Welsh wilderness Henry is more physically accustomed to Tasmanian wilderness conditions than many of the lowland locals who continue to treat him as an outsider. In this sense the character of Henry incorporates some of the tensions and uniting features between the differing yet similar landscapes in which he has made his home. But this sense of being part of the two natural worlds is limited to Henry's physical endurance to survive

the harsh terrain and weather and to his resourcefulness in these conditions. Contrary to the recurring theme in nationalist literature of "the two mistresses" (referring to old mother Britain and the new, fickle mistress, Australia) Henry is a maverick and displays no sense of patriotic or spiritual connection with either land (Schaffer 85). Both "soils" are servants to his mastery. This exploitation is paralleled by his relationship with his wife and son who work primarily to fulfil his ambitions. Unsurprisingly for the era Henry's interest in the environment, whether in Wales or the Tasmanian Highlands, remains at the level of its utility for his own "empire-building."

Tasmanian-born Ruby, from Bothwell, readily adapts to the mountain wilderness. Usually passive-natured her occasional challenges to Henry's overbearing authority are quickly defeated. Yet her resilience and inner strength are consistently demonstrated. Ruby symbolises the enduring landscape—as it is shaped by weather patterns, erosion, and anthropocentric activity she also is hurt and healed by her relationships, both human and with her environment. Her superstitious fear of the dark escalates and her terror is expressed through Gothic images. For most of the story Scholes shoots images of heavy dark skies, deep shadows, jagged rock edges and desolate barren outcrops, sometimes intensified by the discordant and disturbing soundtrack. Although effective dramatically the resulting mood allows for misinterpretation regarding Ruby's fears, which are not about the wilderness itself but about the dark.

"Darkness" is a material and psychological element in the narrative of *Ruby Rose*. A negative aesthetic informs Gothic texts and "darkness—an absence of the light associated with sense, security and knowledge—characterises the looks, moods, atmospheres and connotations of the genre" (Botting 1–2). The Gothic trope of "darkness" manifests in an anecdote from Ruby's early childhood. A child in her cot, one night Ruby is attacked by a Tasmanian devil and this unconscious but pervasive fear eventually is revealed as the catalyst for her anxiety. The Tasmanian devil does not conform to the popular stereotype of cuddly cute animal, either

physically or in terms of "personality." Instead, it is a small but fierce black carnivorous marsupial with formidable jaws and a demonic howl. It generally prefers carrion and is renowned for digesting bones and gristle. Local stories about lost bushwalkers frequently claim rubber boots as the only remains found. When these real qualities are combined with the historical symbolism of "devils" as evil, pagan, a metaphor for darkness (and even Aborigines in Australian symbolism), the Tasmanian devil is a neat fit for Gothic aesthetics. Given that *Ruby Rose* is enjoying a revival, in an ironic twist, twenty-first century audiences would generally be aware of the devil's ecological significance as an endangered species. Now, considerable resources are dedicated to overcoming the facial tumour which is threatening to eradicate it. Nevertheless, even a contemporary ecological understanding like this has its Gothic elements derived from the visually grotesque facial tumour. While it has been represented humorously (although negatively) in Walt Disney cartoons the vulnerable creature seems destined to elude any form of sentimentalising or Romanticising.[27]

While Scholes utilises Gothic images of the environment to metaphorically evoke Ruby's psychic state it is important to notice that the wild landscape itself is not the causal factor for her fear of the dark. Instead, Ruby's animistic affinity with the landscape and native creatures leads her to believe the stars are "her friends" keeping nightly watch over her. When the stars are obscured by cloud Ruby panics, but the source of her terror is darkness. If Ruby was frightened of the wilderness surrounding her she would not venture alone from their hut to track a lost goat across the escarpment. She becomes afraid only with the realisation she will

[27] While I am not recommending the anthropomorphising or sentimental representation of animals *per se* this approach is proven to have positive outcomes in terms of engendering compassion and concern for their welfare. Thus advocates of animal welfare are divided on this issue, both between each other and within themselves.

not reach her sources of light, i.e., candles and lanterns which she has in the hut, before darkness falls. Later on in the narrative, as she traverses the mountains on her journey to Bothwell, she is comfortable in the vast landscape because when she makes camp she keeps a tiny filigree-patterned lantern burning from dusk to dawn. Finally, as her superstitious fears exacerbate they are not relieved by being inside the relative safety of the hut at night. Once the lanterns are extinguished and the fire burns to coals Ruby still needs to practice protective rituals like sprinkling flour over the sleeping men to keep away the dark. Eventually, as even the flour loses its strength, Ruby believes the darkness is increasing and this is the catalyst for her journey to the lowlands—to find a new source of protection against the dark. Consequently, there are fractures and tensions in Scholes prevailing Gothic representation of the Central Highlands wilderness because they are not in accord with Ruby's point-of-view.

Ruby's emotional needs including her fear of the dark, her isolation (in part exacerbated by Henry never divulging the existence of her grandmother) and her desire to journey to Bothwell are trivialised and dismissed by her husband. On the other hand, Jem senses Ruby's desperation and pleads with Henry to let her go with them next time. Henry's tenderness towards Ruby is sporadic and he is not receptive to their requests. In line with his exploitation of the wildlife of the area Ruby is also a major resource for his needs. With Ruby as housekeeper, cook, pelt dryer, general roustabout and companion Henry is free to hunt and trade for supplies and work on his "dreams." Scholes' portrayal of Ruby displays some ideological stereotyping of women and nature. (It is Henry who relies on *her* to read the weather patterns and predict snow). It also associates the exploitation of the environment (especially native animals), with the role of the female suggesting similar subordination. But, Ruby's courageous solitary journey across the mountains to Bothwell (against Henry's wishes) successfully subverts the passivity of her position. Unsure of the track she navigates by reading the landscape, the stars, the sun and the mountain ranges. During the course of her journey she

gives medical attention to Mr Bennett, escapes the timber-camp and fulfils a dying man's final request by delivering his body to his wife. She achieves all of this through an intuitive self-sufficiency, working *with* the natural world rather than trying to master it as Henry does. It is only when she attempts to bring "civilisation," in the form of a heavy armchair that belonged to her grandmother, back across the mountains to their hut that an accident occurs and the environmental elements close in around her. It is this anomalous domestic item "imported" from the town that is represented as the catalyst for Ruby's hazardous event rather than any aspects of the wilderness itself.

In *Ruby Rose* Scholes' representation of the Central Highlands relies on Steve Mason's evocative cinematography to showcase the spectacular beauty of the landscape and thus advocate for its conservation value. This approach is controversial for ecocritics as any ethic premised entirely on the concept of beauty, rather than habitat for wildlife, endangered species or biodiversity value, for example, is anthropocentric rather than ecocentric. Nevertheless, amidst the spectacular panoramic mountain scenes there are moments of ecological "dialogue" which include: the heap of discarded wallaby carcasses in the film's early scenes (previously discussed); and the felling of a giant tree which could be read as rainforest exploitation and destruction. Through documentary-style footage Ruby emerges from the forest into a ramshackle timber-camp dominated by migrant workers. The cook (apparently the only female there) leads her through the loggers' laundry—a shed crammed with men and equipment. Ruby cowers like a captured wild animal as deafening jets of steam interrupt a cacophony of voices and machines. Such "invasion" of a sublime landscape by the industrial age suggests Romantic sensibilities but these are overshadowed by Gothic metaphors of menace evoking Ruby's personal fears from childhood trauma and years of isolation. While conventional Gothic aesthetic representations dominate *Ruby Rose* this scene of rainforest destruction suggests a contemporary ecological fracture to this aesthetic. When the group of timber-workers celebrate

the felling of a giant tree the camera lingers on the huge girth and numerous growth rings of the desecrated stump "hinting" at its ancientness. Reminiscent of MacGregor's construction of "Smelterscape" these two "ecological conversations" in *Ruby Rose*, the discarded wallaby carcasses and the old-growth tree-felling, make contemporary political statements amidst the mainly Gothic and occasionally Romantic aesthetic.

Scholes' restraint in characters' conversations and reliance on the visual image to tell the story is, of course, typical of film: "film takes words out of narrative and replaces them with sights and sounds, appealing directly to the senses;" (Turner 15). Yet within this "silence" film images reveal Aboriginal presence (and absence) simultaneously in *Ruby Rose*. While there are no Indigenous characters and no verbally explicit reference to Indigenous impact on the land the historical presence of The Big River and North West nations (which occupied the area up to a century before the narrative timeframe) is written onto the land itself. Images of ancient topographical features, originally formed by nature's erosion reveal further tailoring and tapering by Aboriginal excursion tracks and rainforest clearings. These anthropogenic modifications to the wilderness are not commonly understood and it could be argued that the omission of Aboriginal characters (in either real or spectral form) tends to perpetuate their invisibility. Conversely this absence does have the advantage of avoiding negative Gothic constructions of Aboriginal people "as the monstrous figures haunting the Australian landscape, spectres more frightening than any European demon," (Turcotte 9). To include Indigenous characters in this narrative timeframe the obvious approach would be to locate them in the past and thus in spectral form. Ironically, an Indigenous perspective could be used to invert conventional Gothic tropes to depict the white settlers as grotesque and a threat to the environment. In addition, identifying as Aboriginal, (there are many "hybrid" descendants from black and white relationships in Tasmania today and in 1933), remains fraught with cultural and legal complexity. Given her natural affinity with the landscape it is conceivable that the

character of Ruby, for example, *could* be interpreted as "native" in terms of nature and nurture. But Scholes does not allude to Aboriginality in any way. While including aspects of Aboriginal culture and history could deliver a "neat-fit" for a Gothic aesthetic Scholes maintains a "strategic silence."

To recapitulate, ultimately, *Ruby Rose* is a conventional Gothic portrayal of the Tasmanian wilderness. The harsh monochromatic representations of the mountains, the primitive timber hut, with animal skins drying around the fire, and the vegetable mud-garden do not conform to rose or ivy-covered, whitewashed or stone, cottages of the popular and persuasive traditional European picturesque. Moreover, the overall bleak effect is enhanced by a threatening "cloud grammar" of swirling mists and impending storms. Such Gothic emphasis in the topography of the Central Plateau coupled with the other catalogue of Gothic elements in the narrative cast nature as threatening but, as I have argued, this is not the only aesthetic operating in the film. Furthermore, the characters in the narrative, while they endure physical hardship, rarely find the landscape threatening and do not seek to escape it. Henry is building a new and improved homestead for his family's future, Jem makes no attempts to leave his adoptive parents and live in the lowlands and, while Ruby visits Bothwell, she soon returns, of her own volition, to the desolate mountains which she refers to as "home."

For ecocritics the film offers numerous points of emerging ecological dialogue: the ethical complexities related to extinctions and biodiversity which underpin the simplistic portrayal of animal trapping, the old-growth deforestation at the timber camp and moments when the cinematography showcases the ecotourist potential of the wild Central Highlands. In terms of a fractured aesthetic these contemporary ecological concerns all interact within a setting of sublime mountain vistas and also within depictions of the wilderness as a force *against* character's survival. Some images may appear "Gothic" or "Romantic" depending on individual viewers' experiences and interpretations but there is no doubt that *Ruby Rose* also

serves as advocacy for wilderness conservation. Furthermore, *Ruby Rose* was released in 1987, in the wake of the controversial Lake Pedder and Franklin River protests that had raised environmental awareness nationally and internationally. The film was viewed primarily by arthouse audiences, most likely enlightened by The Franklin River Campaign, thus allowing Scholes to capitalise on the growing interest in wilderness protection.

I began my textual analyses with *Ruby Rose* because the governing "Tasmanian Gothic" aesthetic, still prevalent in representations of Tasmania's wilderness, facilitates a point of departure for the rest of my texts. In this reading of *Ruby Rose* discussion of the Gothic aesthetic as a conventional expression of the darker side of nature has featured. I examined competing regimes of representation including traditional Gothic and Romantic and contemporary ecological with a view to the identification and ethical significance of aesthetic fractures and emerging contemporary ecological dialogue within the text. The aesthetic fractures in wilderness representation in *Ruby Rose* do not generally synthesise (in Davidson's sense), and this reflects the very nature of the land itself—an ancient and dynamic wild space which evades mastery and offers incessant challenge.

CHAPTER THREE:

River and Rainforest Symbolism and Representations of Kinship in Richard Flanagan's *Death of a River Guide*

"It is too hard to say something different, to tell a new story" (*DRG* 133)

The previous chapter explored emerging ecological dialogue, within mainly conventional Gothic representations of Tasmanian wilderness in film. In this chapter I examine cultural symbolism, specifically associated with rivers and forests, through Flanagan's hybridised aesthetic representations of the Franklin River World Heritage Region. Flanagan combines Romantic and Australian Indigenous perceptions in *River Guide* to enhance "agential kinships," a term used in the context of material ecocriticism (Iovino and Oppermann 79). The category of agency is extended beyond the realm of the human to "demonstrate the kinship between out-side and in-side, the mind and the world, embracing life, language, mind and sensorial perception in a non-dualistic perspective" (Iovino and Oppermann 79). I use the term "hybridised" to include cultural blends as well as to refer to the entanglement of human and nonhuman subjects. "Literal reference" can be complemented by "literary artifice" to reveal a dynamic and complex interrelationship of shared materiality between nature and culture (Garrard *Ecocriticism* 11). In accord with material ecocriticism the idea of "text" is extended beyond "human material-discursive constructions [to encompass] nonhuman things; water, soil, stones, metals, minerals, bacteria, toxins" for examples (Iovino and Oppermann 83). Ultimately, by analysing the entanglement of symbolism and materiality, I explore how tropes of the rivers and rainforests of the South West Tasmania relate to global ecological consciousness.

In *River Guide* Flanagan avoids some previously dominant patterns of Western representation present in discourse and literature about Tasmania. Rather than perpetuating the privileged white male perspective which regarded forests and rivers primarily for their profitable extractive potential or recreational opportunities, Flanagan offers a cross section of

points-of-view through characterisation and narration. The significant characters in *River Guide* range in class, race, gender and age and offer alternative perceptions from previously dominant voices. In addition, the narratives operate in different timeframes, and through the genres of realism and magic realism. As Laura A. White notes, "Flanagan recognises the experience of relationality between human and nonhuman nature" (274), and the result is that many previously ignored voices from the river communities, including the voice of the river itself, are heard.

River and rainforest, the two topographical features which dominate Flanagan's representation, have each attracted a cluster of symbolic meanings. Literary tropes of rivers and rainforest that express agency, intrinsic significance, primordial kinship and exploitation of the Franklin River region frame my analysis. They also serve Flanagan beyond the needs of material and lyrical description of the land. His human characters are partially constructed through their particular relationships with the wilderness—sometimes as controllers of the land, as dependent upon it (both anthropocentric perspectives) or as *inter*dependent (a position allied to ecocentrism and also Indigeneity).

In *River Guide* Flanagan reveals cases of disparity and complement between cultural symbolism of the Franklin River area and its actual ecological conditions. Many of these examples, both historical, current and represented in *River Guide*, resonate beyond local or even national ecocritical interests because of the unique topographical features inherent in the Tasmanian wilderness. For example, "the rainforest dominants and many of the understorey species are members of the Antarctic (or relict) element of Australia's flora" and thus provide another dimension for imaginative and ecological reference (S.J. Smith and Banks 81). While Tasmania's eco-systems are unique, for European and Northern American sensibilities (particularly but not exclusively) the mountains, cool forests, lakes, moorland and alpine climate frequently elicit a "strangely familiar" illusion of early settlers' and many

contemporary migrants' homelands. Romantic representations have historically enhanced this recognition but this is not to deny actual physical similarities in topography and weather. Flanagan's evocative descriptions, originating from ecological insights and local deforestation and extinctions, capture the sensory and lyrical qualities of Tasmania's cool temperate rainforest which, in turn, may stimulate similar sensory and affective experiences in international readers.

Through Flanagan's representation of the river and rainforest, which is embedded in a long history of both Western and Indigenous cultures, I examine the type of wilderness he portrays in *River Guide* and consider its effectiveness in terms of environmental advocacy. In accord with Clark I argue that "nature can always be read as a cultural/political construction" but ultimately "culture always depends on and is encompassed by actual nature which requires recognition" (94). Tasmania's topographical hybridity or "double aspect," facilitates a point of connective identity which extends beyond nationalist interests to global audiences. In *River Guide* a "double vision," in terms of representation, is captured on the one hand by Flanagan's depiction of voyeuristic tourists or consumerism and exploitation generally, and on the other hand by a Romanticised Indigenous shared materiality and spirituality. Occasional Gothic conventions evoking menace and horror are adopted but generally the narrative is underpinned by a Romantic expression of a primordial sense of material and spiritual kinship. Moments of magic realism re-animate the wilderness and transform it into an enchanted refuge but they also create a means to reveal its own agency and ecological vitality.

Historical Context for the Franklin River region

More than the body of water which flows down its gorge the Franklin River is a network of topographical and cultural features which form part of The Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage region. Rock-strewn gorges carved by erosion confine much of the river, but it is a

protean force which defies absolute borders. Seasonal changes to sections of its banks and vegetation can erode or obscure familiar landmarks and thus evoke a sense of mutable boundaries for returning tour guides and visitors rafting the river. The Franklin River region includes the communities of Strahan and Queenstown. These towns form "subsidiaries" or "branches" of the Franklin River in the sense that the economic and cultural lives of their human populations have been dependent upon or supplemented by the river.

Flanagan's representation of the Franklin River as an autonomous and dynamic entity establishes it as a nonhuman "character" in its own right. As context for interpreting Flanagan's fictional portrayal of the Franklin River region I have created an historical snapshot, initially framed through four human "voices." The four "voices" I construct are underpinned by historical research, and represent defining Indigenous and non-Indigenous environmental sensibilities towards wilderness in the region. At the outset both ancient and recent history are conveyed through the perspective of a female Aboriginal activist, Alice Hungerford, who was part of the core group of anti-dam protestors in 1982-83. Her account is followed by the perceptions of three white men who represent the dominant Eurocentric environmental discourses of the nineteenth-and twentieth-century communities in Tasmania. George Augustus Robinson represents the time of colonisation, James Backhouse Walker represents the "white recreational explorer" of the mid to late nineteenth century and Robin Gray represents late twentieth century (and some may argue, contemporary) conservative State politics. Each of these four "voices" captures a flavour of their respective times, class, gender and race and together they establish a contextual point-of-departure for the subsequent fictional analysis.

Prior to the Western occupation of the South West region there was an ancient Indigenous presence which had survived the last Ice Age; the South West and Big River nations were still living in the area at the time of colonisation in 1803 (Ryan 37). The rediscovery of

Kutikina cave in 1977, a significant archaeological site for Aboriginal culture and global history, contributed to the region's World Heritage listing. The Aboriginal community had a separate movement to protect not only the river but their cultural heritage. "All along the Franklin River, there was a pathway, and it was used for thirty plus thousand years. In fact, the caves that sit along the Franklin River operated as a refuge for Aboriginal groups for about 5000 years during the last ice age, between 20 000 and 15 000 years ago" (Hungerford 20). As Aboriginal activist Alice Hungerford notes, "There are a million acres of buttongrass plains in the South West that Aboriginal people burned on a regular basis. If you know this when you go into the South West, it's like the Aboriginal people are still there. Certainly their spirit is still there, living in that landscape" (21). It is still not common knowledge amongst the Tasmanian community that buttongrass plains are the product of Indigenous firestick farming and this perpetuates misunderstanding related to regional ecology and Indigenous history and culture.

By 1830 the population of the clans of the South West nation had declined from between 200 and 300 to about sixty (Ryan 160). Most of the Aboriginal resistance movement had surrendered but a few escaped into the bush. George Augustus Robinson was responsible for finding and removing them from the island, by force if necessary. "Convinced that he was capturing the Aborigines for their own good," (Ryan 214) Robinson's views are reflected in his journal entry in May 1833:

> Patriotism is a distinguishing trait in the aboriginal character, yet for all the love they bear their country the aboriginal settlement will soon become their adopted country and they will find that protection which they cannot find in their own land, not only against the attack of the whites but also against the tribes in hostilities with them. (Robinson qtd. in Ryan 207)

By 1833 Robinson had "completed his mission of dispossession" and the last two hundred or so full-blood Tasmanian Aborigines were interned at Wybalenna Settlement on Flinders Island (Kleinert 35).

With the threat of the Indigenous population removed white settlement forged ahead in the colony. Communities strategically developed around essential and abundant natural resources attracted prospectors and pastoralists, while the South West wilderness itself began to appeal to artists and recreational hikers. In 1887 a solicitor and historian, James Backhouse Walker, and his hiking party, descended from Tasmania's West Coast ranges and entered dense myrtle forest on the slopes surrounding the Franklin gorge. Walker's diary entry described the Franklin River as "a fine stream flowing between thickly wooded banks over a bed of dark boulders" (27). One of his companions concluded that myrtle "scrubs" translate the traveller "in an instant to the cool, shady Romantic forests of Southern or Central Europe" (22). Plates framing the picturesque aspects of the landscape by local artist William Charles Piguenit, (who was part of Walker's hiking party), accompany Walker's diary text published posthumously as *Walk to the West*. The area, however, was difficult to access and its ecological value and natural beauty relatively unknown. Many of Walker's diary entries record the unique vegetation of the area: "a group of the palmlike giant grass tree, *Richea pandanifolia*, the first we had seen" (27) and later the endemic and relatively uncommon rainforest tree the huon pine or *Lagarostrobus franklinii* which he claimed has "almost a mystical quality in Tasmania" (42). Walker's diary encapsulates one of many dominant voices representing the Franklin River from colonisation and into the twenty-first century. A professional white man (educated partly in the North of England) Walker's "aesthetic" is primarily that of a naturalist providing an objective record of the area. Infused with the spirit of exploration he celebrates the sublime panoramic beauty of the wilderness while simultaneously recording the micro details of its material reality in Latin.

Almost a century later another professional white man, also a "naturalist" of sorts,[28] presented an entirely different perspective on the Franklin River region. Tasmania's thirty-seventh state premier, The Honorable Robin Gray dismissed the Franklin River as "nothing but a brown ditch, leech-ridden and unattractive to the majority of people" (Crowley 40). Gray led his Liberal government in a campaign to dam the Franklin River for one of the many state hydroelectric power developments. This proposed dam was the catalyst for one of the biggest environmental campaigns in both local and international history.

Tasmanian history is replete with examples of unsustainable extraction industry practices. The century separating Walker and Gray is an interesting period in terms of environmental management, especially with regard to early piners' and snarers' relationship with the land and Flanagan includes rainforest pioneers in his narrative. There is also a complex history of socio-political divisions within the communities of Queenstown and Strahan whose populations have developed around mining and forestry industry employment. I outline regional historical practices and events where relevant in my textual analysis (and also in the Introduction and Chapter Six). *River Guide* includes retrospective and projected scenarios but its main timeframe is the early 1990s. Published in 1994, Flanagan, an environmental activist, would be aware of contemporary wilderness environmental issues including implications of deforestation for global warming.

The material absence yet supernatural or symbolic presence of Aborigines features often in Australian literature. This trope manifests in Flanagan's text in particular—*River Guide* includes part-Aboriginal characters in the narrative present and also spiritual presences evoked through the changing consciousness of his protagonist Aljaz the river guide. In the

[28] Robin Gray had a Bachelor of Agricultural Science and served as the Chairman of Botanical Resources Australia Pty. Ltd.

context of her discussion of Aboriginal custodianship Hungerford claims that the forest "on the Gordon and Franklin rivers is there because Aboriginal people didn't burn it" (21).

While centuries of Indigenous land management preserved much of the rainforest around the Franklin River, twentieth-century-community politics also played a significant part. The Tasmanian Wilderness Society (later known as The Wilderness Society), formed in 1976 and was comprised primarily of former United Tasmania Group members and the Southwest Tasmania Action Committee. While both Tasmanian State Labor and Liberal parties wanted a dam development they were divided on its location until eventually the Franklin River was chosen in 1982 (Lohrey 17). This coincided with the nomination of Southwest Tasmania, (which includes the Gordon and Franklin Rivers), for World Heritage Listing and the fight for the Franklin accelerated. Work on the dam had already commenced but on 14th December 1982 "no dams" protestors formed a blockade across the river with a flotilla of small boats which endured for some months. After a Federal election brought a change of party, the new Labor Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, announced he would intervene to prevent the flooding of the Franklin River. In 1983, the local Green Movement, led at the time by high-profile white activist Dr Bob Brown claimed victory. After a sustained international and nation-wide protest, the HEC bulldozers, already working in the forest, were stopped, and the dam proposal finally defeated in the High Court through Federal Government intervention.

Lohrey identifies the Franklin River protest as the central campaign to broaden the TWS profile from "bearded backpackers and vegetarian cranks" into representatives of "a new political sensibility [that] had broken through into the mainstream" (27). They emerged not only as a single issue party, campaigning for wilderness, but also as a group presenting "a comprehensive critique of modern industrial policy and the funding of the Hydro Electric Commission" (26). Greenies "were becoming assimilated into the old utilitarian notion of the greatest good for the greatest number" (Lohrey 27). This change in culture coupled with the

high profile Franklin River protest and the charismatic Bob Brown culminated in, "according to Brown, the highest Green vote recorded in any general election anywhere in the world" in 2002 (Lohrey 52).[29]

Current ecocriticism needs "a strategy for opening up the local to the global" in order to emphasise planetary-scale interconnections (Buell, Heise and Thornber 421). Buell, Heise and Thornber suggest "reconceptualising place as a node in a global network" and that this process can "become a point of departure for understanding and emotionally relating to global ecological processes" (421). Accordingly, I interpret *River Guide's* imaginary representations of the Franklin River region as a microcosm, a "moral laboratory" for developing concern for vulnerable wild places globally. The linking of the particular with the universal was also part of the Green Movement's response thirty years ago. This is evidenced by one of the many protest banners displayed by the Franklin River activists which read: "Think Globally, Act Locally" (Hungerford 174).

Fictional scenarios, like many in *River Guide*, generate a complex interplay between readers' intellects, senses and emotions through a combination of naturalist description and literary symbolism. Heise asserts that fiction tends to "emphasise the misunderstandings that arise when individuals and communities with different cultural assumptions encounter crises" (*Teaching Ecocriticism* 97) Yet, she also claims "that a global or cosmopolitan perspective can only arise from the ability to look at environmental issues from several, sometimes conflicting cultural angles" (*Teaching Ecocriticism* 97). It is this latter comment that is of particular relevance for my research. *River Guide* contributes to a sense of planetary-scale-

[29] In July 2002, the Green gained an "unprecedented 18 per cent of the vote—not only their highest vote ever but, according to Brown, the highest Green vote recorded in any general election anywhere in the world" (Lohrey 52).

interconnection by presenting diverse and at times conflicting cultural perspectives. The protagonist Aljaz suggests a hybrid sense of kinship through his initial presentation as an ecologically aware white man but who ultimately discovers his Aboriginal ancestry. Flanagan constructs Aljaz's responses to the river and rainforest from a blend of Western Romantic ideals and complex interrelations typical of the local Indigenous people's sense of kinship. Topographical features and body parts of creation-beings merge and "the distinction between the living and the non-living, so basic to Western ontologies, is less real" in the Indigenous cultures (Kleinert 33).

In contrast the Europeans "failed to establish a partnership with natural resources, which were exploited and then disregarded" (Kleinert 34). However, the river and rainforest in *River Guide* are not constructed as passive natural elements but instead are invested with a sense of agency which increases the human/nonhuman entanglement. In literature generally, matter [river and rainforest ecosystems, for example] can be seen: "as manifesting an inherent creative power, a vitality" which disrupts the conventional nature/culture binary to reinforce "the idea of horizontality rather than hierarchy" (Marland 857). Yet Marland's "fairly harmonious picture of interrelationship and shared qualities—a broadly deep ecological notion of 'agential kinships'"—when I apply it to Flanagan's text, is occasionally disrupted through a "more disorientating hybridity" a shared materiality derived from both immediate and diffused effects of pollution (Marland 857). Such exchange of components renders both human and nonhuman agents as unpredictable and thus creates further opportunities to extend moral imagination. Competing ethical positions may be further complicated by a sometimes fractured aesthetic which evokes some correspondence with MacGregor's "Smelterscape," for example.

The nonhuman agent, the Franklin River is both unpredictable and complex through its elemental form. "Water is both the symbol and agent of change. Its fecund penetration of the earth is the source of life," yet it can also violently destroy communities through torrential

deluge (Herendeen 82). Human attempts to "harness" its force are not always successful as rivers flood their banks and dams burst as a result of unpredictable natural events (see Chapter Six for my analysis of Flanagan's fictional narrative of the Clark dam break in *The Sound of One Hand Clapping*). Water is power, not just energy but social and political power for those who control it. Given the environmental history I have outlined this notion of "power" is most relevant for the Franklin River which is, both materially and culturally, a wellspring for communities spanning centuries. Historically water also has symbolic power in terms of mythology, psychology, poetry and ecological discourse. Water can create, purify, sustain and erode. Recent scientific theories suggesting all life on Earth originated from hydrothermal vents in the sea provides some material credence for centuries of water symbolism. Water is also associated with maternal dimensions through its nurturing qualities, both psychologically and literally in terms of amniotic fluid. References to birth occur in *River Guide* but conversely "water claims a succession of lives …[it] pulverizes and dissolves bodies [and] creates, conceals and relocates corpses" (Polack 100). Such multiplicity of meaning serves Flanagan well as his protagonist is both "reborn" and drowned in the simultaneously cathartic and consuming forces of the Franklin River.

Thirty years on the Franklin River victory is still celebrated by the Wilderness Society of Australia, its iconic status underpinned (or perhaps overshadowed at times) by its ecological representation. This reverence by conservationists and ecotourists evokes a secular parallel with the mythic religious stature of other ancient rivers like the Nile and the Jordan River. Over centuries "popular lore has magnified the Jordan in the minds of millions" but in just three decades the Franklin River has gained national and international recognition (Peppard 114). However, there is at least one significant material difference between these two revered rivers—the material reality of the Jordan River is a small highly polluted body of water which has been "dammed, siphoned, redirected into underground pipes heading for Tel Aviv, and

replaced by a spout of barely treated sewage that foams into a dry, rocky canal" (Peppard 115, 12). While "most of the world's river systems and freshwater ecosystems have already been dammed, diverted, polluted or somehow modified by human activities" (Cracraft and Grifo 288), the wild Franklin River is one of two major rivers in Tasmania (the other is the Davey) "which have not been dammed or are not seriously polluted" (S.J. Smith and Banks 114). Yet the Franklin could be a victim of its own success as tourism increases. While white-water recreation seems to have little impact "tourist boat activity on the Lower Gordon River has been cited as a problem: mainly through the wake damaging the banks" (S.J. Smith and Banks 122).

With so few wild places remaining and those left increasingly vulnerable to unsustainable anthropogenic practices, whose account of the Franklin River will future generations select as their "reality"? If the river becomes polluted or dammed, will Walker's pioneering experience or Gray's "leech ridden ditch" remain embedded in cultural memories? Perhaps the mythological and poetic motifs of Flanagan will flow on, changing the course of environmental history by inspiring communities to care for wild places. Although extensive deforestation and damming has occurred in Tasmania there remain large tracts of relative wilderness in the form of rainforest, moorland and peatland. Unlike many other parts of the globe (where wilderness has all but disappeared, or been degraded), it is not too late to prevent further human impact of the type which leads to destruction. Consequently, fiction (even when underpinned by realism), need not represent the Tasmanian wilderness by declensionist narratives alone. Given there are very few wild rivers left in the world the Franklin's iconic status may one day rival the Jordan. Through contemporary prophecies embedded in fictional narratives like *River Guide* the Franklin (unlike the Jordan) may remain unpolluted, undammed and surrounded by rainforest. In this sense its symbolic status is reflected by its actual ecological conditions. Optimistic scenarios, both fictional and factual, celebrating vulnerable

wilderness, gain credibility and relevance through their depiction of realisable future possibilities. Through tropes of river and forest Flanagan's contemporary novel *River Guide* represents a number of competing ethical positions through different literary aesthetics thus providing fruitful material for ecocriticism. Flanagan's portrayal of the Franklin River World Heritage area is part of a global literary and cultural heritage of representations of rivers and forest and I identify the ways in which he challenges and/or complies with such traditions.

Popular reviews for *River Guide* and interviews with the author have been numerous but academic literary criticism of the novel has been relatively sparse. Early analyses tended to focus on revisionist colonial history, and their implications for genealogical island stories. Marc Delrez, for example, attempts to "redeem [the novel] from readings which see it mainly as an instance of appropriation of Aboriginal culture and spirituality on the part of a white settler writer living in Australia" (117). Fiona Polack uses tropes of water, "mother nature" and homecoming, to read Flanagan's representation of Tasmania in the novel as a "haven[s] from the disorienting effects of postmodernism" (93). Recently Joseph Cummins read the soundscapes, (for example, discourses of Australian Gothic sound) in *River Guide* as "a transhistorical continuum of sound that links the colonial to the present" (1). Laura A. White offers a postcolonial ecocritical analysis of *River Guide* by focussing on Flanagan's affective narration which redefines "the human as embodied participant with the nonhuman world" (274). White contends "that [Flanagan's] novel constitutes an environmentalist intervention" and my analysis adds to this discourse (265). White's analysis constitutes a point of departure for my posthumanist emphasis on representations of shared materiality and agential kinships in Flanagan's novel.

Death of a River Guide –Kinship, Alienation and Exploitation:

Timothy Clark reminds us that the depersonalising effect of rationalist forms of scientific communication have engendered "disenchantment" with the natural world, that it "has lost its

magic, that rivers are reduced to an energy source for hydroelectric dams, the sea to a thoroughfare for oil tankers and waste disposal [and that] these are now widespread perceptions" (143). Flanagan's imaginative representation of the Franklin River and surrounding wilderness revitalises the "lost magic" of the natural world while drawing attention to human impact on the region's vulnerable ecology. In the past, the use of cultural symbolism in Eurocentric discourse on the environment has tended to legitimise human domination of the environment; a belief that has characterised Tasmania's social and economic history. However, Flanagan's aesthetic disrupts the conventional binary pattern that underpins this discourse by embedding significant characters as part of the natural world—in this case the Franklin River wilderness area.

Most of the narrative for *River Guide* is set either on the Franklin River itself or in the surrounding rainforest. There are several timeframes with flashbacks as early as 1832, but the narrative present is 1993. The story begins with the protagonist, Aljaz Cosini, drowning in the Franklin River. After an unsuccessful attempt to rescue one of his rafting group, Aljaz remains trapped between boulders. He is experiencing visions and hallucinations as his oxygen level diminishes. Through a magic realist aesthetic, Aljaz's altered states of consciousness enable Flanagan to transcend actual time and place. Aljaz can see rafts on the water above him as the other guide attempts a rescue operation. He can "see" the actions and events which led to his drowning in replay and he can also "see" generations of his family and other ancient communities who lived around the river.

Many of Tasmania's disturbing historical and contemporary contradictions are revealed through Aljaz's visions, as he leads a group of tourists on a rafting expedition along the Franklin River. Murder, rape, incest and cannibalism inform the Gothic melodrama that is Tasmania's popular history. Tourists enjoy and expect grotesque stories about Tasmania's past, rendered all the more delicious when set in impenetrable, bleak wilderness. Aljaz reluctantly

complies, claiming "it is too hard to say something different, to tell a new story that no one has told" (*DRG* 133). It is not without some irony, then, that Flanagan breaks with tradition in *River Guide* by rejecting a stereotypical Gothic portrayal of Tasmania's wilderness. Instead he creates a complex, multi-layered wilderness from a variety of cultural, individual and aesthetic perspectives.

While the forest, or wilderness, has physical boundaries separating it from developed areas, in literature it often symbolises the distinction between humans and nature. "A history of ways of conceiving and treating the forest is thus one of different conceptions of being human" (Clark 62). Historically conceptions of "forest" or wilderness range from places of evil spirits or sacred healing to sites of material resources or ecological protection. Initially Flanagan presents a dichotomy by positioning his human characters in terms of belonging to or alienation from the wilderness. This division is generally framed around characters with Indigenous blood and others. The group of "others" includes the white piners and snarers, industry developers and voyeuristic tourists who view the land primarily as a resource to exploit. The Indigenous group (some are also piners and snarers) include Aljaz, his father Harry, his grandfather Boy and Aunt Ellie and her brothers—all of whom share some degree of Aboriginal ancestry. While the "others" may skilfully live *off* the land, in *River Guide* only the Indigenous group are represented as *part* of the land.

Aljaz does not discover his Aboriginal ancestry, nor is it revealed to readers, until late in the narrative. Arguably his Aboriginal heritage justifies postcolonial implications concerning some appropriation of Indigenous culture. Marc Delrez, for example, identifies the "bifurcation of mythologies which characterize the novel as a whole" and regards them as evidence that Flanagan "refuses the fantasy of fully embodied reconciliation" (127). Delrez concludes that *River Guide* "tends to subvert the settler-native dichotomy … in a way which is relevant to the very specific context of Tasmania where there are no longer any indigenous

people of solely Aboriginal genetic inheritance" (127). Delrez's argument may be extended when one observes how Flanagan's theme of primordial kinship can disrupt environmental representations associated with national/global divisions. Through a prophetic tone Aljaz claims the land itself as the connecting link between humans rather than history, society, culture or familial bonds. "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh. But what connects the two? What remains? What abideth in the earth forever?" (*DRG* 10). Mythological associations of kinship between humans and the rest of the natural world are one of the keynotes for Flanagan's *River Guide.* Generally, he represents the ethical dilemmas of contemporary local environmental issues including forestry conservation, biodiversity and extinction, obliquely (through symbolism) rather than directly. Moreover, his aesthetic representation can have wider contemporary implications when viewed through the global lens of climate change.

Through Aljaz's visions Flanagan introduces the wilderness as dynamic and enchanted: "The spirit of the sleeping and the dying in the rainforest roam everywhere, see everything" (*DRG* 9). It is implied that the rainforest has "special" qualities which elude the rational mind. Established as "superior truths," these "qualities" are analogous to myths, with the "facts of newspapers" seen as inferior (*DRG* 10). An erotic element is introduced as Aljaz describes the ancient cycles of birth, decay, and death which perpetuate the natural world. Like an extension of his own material form, the kind of extension and familiarity one might attribute to a long-term lover, Aljaz intimately describes the river and surrounding rainforest through his own sensuality. Its smell is an "energetic stench of decay," its sound "the roar" and its light "the mass of glistening white" (*DRG* 14). His interior monologue evokes the river's autonomous agency, "a world pure and whole and complete unto itself … writing its past and prophesying its future in massive gorges slicing through mountains and cliffs" *(DRG* 14). This perception of the Franklin River reflects the material ecocritical view that, "matter itself [can] become[s] a text where dynamics of 'diffuse' agency … are inscribed and produced" (Iovino and

Oppermann 79–80). The river's ancientness is conveyed through the motif of erosion as its gorge metamorphoses through mountain to cliff, to boulder, to stone to gravel generated by the power of water. Aljaz describes it as an alien world but not in terms of its vast and wild space, as one might expect. He finds the Franklin River strange because, unlike much contemporary human entanglement with the environment the river is not polluted like human habitats. Aljaz's heightened perception contrasts the river with a polluted human world, "Neither rubber condoms nor rubber tyres nor tin cans nor dioxins nor bent rusting chrome reminders of the cars they once graced nor any of the other detritus of our world seem to abide here" (*DRG* 14). In the first thirty pages Flanagan establishes a sense of *inter*dependence with the wilderness for Aljaz. Flanagan then proceeds to juxtapose this with the anthropocentric and alienated responses of the rafting tourists (punters).

Despite their bravado and exclamations about the spectacular scenery, the tourists find the primeval atmosphere unsettling. From the outset Aljaz reads their growing unease as the rainforest closes in behind them. While familiar in one sense, from "the wilderness calendars that adorn their lounge-rooms and offices," the reality of scale renders it more threatening than decorative (*DRG* 20). They search desperately, through their camera lenses, for reassuring images of the picturesque, but the density and vastness of the rainforest shatters the borders as they frame them.

Later, after sunset, when the group is sleeping around the campfire tensions and competing aesthetics of wilderness discourse become apparent through Aljaz's vision of the punters and himself "enshrouded by rainforest" (*DRG* 30). An evocative word which can be interpreted to reflect numerous mythological and symbolic meanings "enshrouded" can be a covering, a screen, a shelter or shade (all suggesting protection), but it can also have darker connotations as it refers to the winding sheet wrapped around corpses before burial. Thus both protection and death are evoked, and given the narrative context, this subtle reference to death

is poignant. But there is another quite different meaning for the word "shroud," that is, a tree branch or lopping. I find this poetic possibility most relevant in the light of Aljaz's developing affinity with the natural world, and Flanagan's *leitmotif* of humans metamorphosing into trees. Through mythological connections the sleeping humans within the rainforest can be read imaginatively as branches from the trees which make up the forest. Flanagan's narration reflects an ancient tradition of, in the words of Robert Harrison, the troping "of metamorphosis [that] dramatizes the ultimately insubstantial nature of the forms of creation, and in so doing [pointing] to the affiliations that link all things together by virtue of their common genesis" (29). In the broader ecological sense, shroud/branch becomes "a lateral extension or subdivision of a main body," in this case the natural world ("shroud," def. 5b).[30] Multiple meanings and connotations of "enshrouded" exemplify the independent agency of language itself to interact with and influence the dynamic material context of Flanagan's narrative.

Flanagan's primordial image of humans cocooned or "enshrouded" by wilderness gestures towards principles of deep-ecology, and fractures the more Gothic experiences of the punters. It also has the potential to evoke both Eurocentric and Indigenous symbolism. The phrase "enshrouded by rainforest" is indicative of the rich complexity of linguistic cultural symbolism in environmental representation. Different visions from different timeframes and characters, expressed through literary cultural symbolism, generate plural perceptions of the same wilderness and demonstrate the complexity of environmental representation. At its

[30] Myths of kinship originate from early material philosophers' ideas related to form and matter. They were "generally agreed that all things come into being—assume form and appearance—from out of the womb of some primordial, undifferentiated matter. While forms are forever changing and passing away, the matter of which they are composed remains eternal" (Harrison 26–27).

simplest level the Gothic features which unsettle the punters, when expressed in isolation in a text, generate negative alienated responses to wilderness. On the other hand, Romantic interpretation of embryonic protection and extension positions the human as part of the rainforest. A key question for ecocriticsm is whether this kind of trope enhances contemporary environmental awareness in any way? The image is primarily anthropocentric through its context-defined association with qualities of protection for humans. For a group of similarly alienated readers (like the punters) this scenario may counteract any sense of menace but, of itself, it does not convey the vulnerability of the rainforest to human agency. Nevertheless, creating a timeless sense of nature/culture unity, as Flanagan does through the point-of-view of Aljaz, has the potential to develop empathy which may extend to nonhuman entities.

Flanagan draws from both European and Aboriginal mythology to express nostalgic bonds of kinship between humans and the rest of nature. Harrison's (previously quoted) comments on Western ideas of metamorphoses and the common genesis of all life forms resonate with aspects of Aboriginal mythology: "this world of human origins is one of partly formed embryos which have the potential to engender many different forms of life. The division between the ancestral and human world is ambiguous, as forms move from one state of being to another" (Morphy 76). By alluding to a hybridised version of these cultural myths Flanagan enhances a sense of primal kinship between the river and forest and Aljaz (and his ancestors). Cross-species affiliations and shared materiality is augmented further by depicting the human characters' appearance in terms of the natural world. Flanagan successfully subverts the historical approach in Western literature which uses the environment merely as a backdrop for human drama. Instead, he privileges exploited wilderness features while also suggesting Aljaz's own emotional state. Aljaz describes his own face in terms of regional topography: "like a clearfelled mountain side," "an eroded black-bedrock wasteland of a face … the large nose that sits like an abandoned mining tower over the desolation it inhabits" (*DRG* 18). This

is not entirely without reflection of human traits, though, as the "abandoned," "desolate" and "eroded" adjectives convey the world-weary, melancholy dimension of Aljaz's inner life.

Later Aljaz describes his father Harry in terms of endemic vegetation: "eyes drift like the white leatherwood blossom …" (*DRG* 45). Aljaz's visions access Harry's consciousness: "Harry would imagine *his* father, [Boy] merging into the soft brown and grey hues so completely that he became one of the hut's upright King Billy pine posts" (*DRG* 70). When burying Boy, after he was crushed by a falling myrtle bough, Harry thought "his father looked more like a tree than ever" (*DRG* 74). In contrast the punters seek reassurance, not immersion, from the environment, and they search for signs of civilisation. Their journey:

> took them past huge rocks that arose from the water like monsters, past sandbanks bearing traces of strange animal prints, took them through the sound of wind moving manferns in the most beautiful of motions, like sea anemones on the ocean floor. Not that the punters saw this or much else for that matter, for they only saw what they knew and they knew none of it, and recognised little. (*DRG* 80)

From the beginning of the journey the punters' feeling of "integration" was a negative one of annihilation rather than expansion: "They felt consumed by the river, felt that they had allowed it to chew them up in its early gorges and were now being digested in its endlessly winding entrails" (*DRG* 81). Eventually "these people from far away cities whose only measure was man" project images of their own cultural existence onto the river and forest (*DRG* 81). They identify imaginary shapes of human features, or man-made machines in boulders which frame the gorge. The punters strive to regain a sense of security by bringing the "alien" wilderness under their psychological control. Aljaz, on the other hand, seems unaware of a division and merges physically and spiritually with the land.

On occasion Flanagan anthropomorphises the river through metaphor and simile. The river is described in one scene as "beginning to lick the edges of the bank, its appetite

heightening" (*DRG* 142) and, when in flood, "like a huge army on the march, overrunning the countryside" (*DRG* 296): Anthropomorphised representation, in the context of ecocriticism, does not necessarily result in reinstating old hierarchies. It can effectively convey non-hierarchical parallels, like the agency and power of matter shared between humans and nonhumans. When viewed through a metaphor of aggressive human traits Flanagan casts the river in a negative light as predatory and conquering. While this can be read to reflect colonisation and exploitation it also reflects material aspects of the natural world which are premised on flux and disturbance. Moreover, Flanagan's description of the river entangles metaphor and ecological reality which, through an imaginative re-positioning of the nonhuman as a form of "text," "is as much shaped by the stories as by physical forces" (Iovino and Oppermann 82). Images of the flooding river serve as a reminder of its autonomous power, its agency and potential danger for humankind.

Throughout *River Guide* Flanagan offsets his Romantic lyrical depictions of the environment by also representing the literal hazardous power of the river and the predatory violence inherent in the forest. Towards the end of the narrative the river is rising rapidly and the rafters must get through the gorge before the flood peak overruns them. Laden with supplies, the guides scurry back and forth to the rafts, while the river continues to rise under relentless rain. Narrative tension builds as the character of the river transforms from the previously serene body of water, "little more than a creek" to an "extraordinary physical presence that cannot be denied" (*DRG* 296). "The entire gorge seems to vibrate with the sound of its rapids. Its low hum is punctuated by the rumble of huge boulders being rolled along, clacking and cracking and groaning in their work of reshaping the riverbed, and by the clump of water-borne trees and logs colliding with low-lying riverbank trees" (*DRG* 296–97)

Through his visions Aljaz watches and evaluates his own behaviour believing he is responsible for the punters' danger because he failed to listen to the "voice" of the river warning

him through its swirls, ebbs and flows. But, as he rides the rapids his adrenaline surges into epiphany and his own body "feels as if it has exploded into the gorge" (*DRG* 299). "He feels every slap of water and bead of rain as a caress.… He feels as if he is the rainforest and the river and the rapid" (*DRG* 299). This imaginative representation of the human body and spirit expanding into nature creates a sense of infinity which can be read as both protective and annihilating. On the one hand it achieves the Romantic trope of integration of the human spirit with the natural world but this sense of "return" or cosmic unity is fractured because it can also evoke a sense of obliteration of individual identity. Flanagan achieves this contrasting effect through the different reactions of his characters. For Aljaz the experience is portrayed as "the feeling of belonging and living" (*DRG* 299) but for the punters their guides have become as "unpredictable and insane as the river itself" (*DRG* 295).

In accord with his multiple representations of the river Flanagan also skilfully fractures lyrical, Romantic descriptions of the forest by confronting depictions of human and animal struggles for survival, or their death. Through his visions Aljaz sees Boy (his grandfather) take his young son Harry (Aljaz's father) on a snaring expedition. The men are portrayed as both perpetrators and victims of nature's indifference. An affective picturesque scene is developed as they "slowly climb to a wonder world of pencil pine and King Billy pine … the occasional deciduous beech copse orange in its final autumn show" (*DRG* 68). Harry's hut, constructed from the surrounding trees, is embedded within the forest: "a hut built of split timber and roofed with wooden shingles, the whole long silvered in the rain and sun, each plank finely etched with tiny tendrils and tufts of dry moss" (*DRG* 68–69). Flanagan's idyllic setting is immediately disrupted by his graphic description of the process of snaring and wildlife death. The "innocence" and suffering of unsuspecting wallabies or possums is evoked as they come "scurrying along their customary track [and run] straight into the snare" (*DRG* 69). In this case the human-designed "twisted brass-wire snares" contrast sensually with the previously

described soft and delicate textures of the "tiny tendrils and tufts of dry moss" growing on the hut (*DRG* 69). Like Roger Scholes' depiction of Henry and son Jem in *The Tale of Ruby Rose* the younger man is concerned about the cruelty and pain of the snares but is reassured by the older one. In this case Boy tells Harry "it bothers them little" but the boy was never quite so sure: "The small shit that hung out of their arses and the dried blood line down the side of their mouths said otherwise" (*DRG* 69). However, while Scholes' character Henry is represented as predatory and indifferent, Flanagan is more sympathetic towards Boy: "But Boy was not one for killing anything unnecessarily, and all his family were as soft as warm dripping when it came to killing things that didn't need killing" (*DRG* 69). Whether Flanagan's description of Boy's family is intended as merely a portrayal of a particular family, regardless of race, or whether it is also/or intended as a Romanticised portrayal of an Indigenous relationship with the land is unclear. There is no doubt that the animal skins drying in the kerosene-lit shed are disturbing for Harry: "Those shadows, those greasy, slippery shadows, they dance before me now like some cabaret of lost souls of slaughtered animals performing a burlesque in Hell" (*DRG* 70–71). Thus the previous Romantic aesthetic of a benign and picturesque forest surrounding Boy's hut has been fractured by this grotesque depiction of animal carnage. This symbolic representation of animal death captures one aspect of the human relationship with nature which is not in accord with an idealised or Romantic interpretation of either Aboriginal mythology of ancestral beings or Greek forms of metamorphoses.

During this snaring trip Harry becomes ill and Boy instructs him to stay in the hut and sweat out his fever. Alone in the forest Boy is killed by the falling bough of a myrtle tree while his son waits several days for his return. Recovered from his fever Harry searches for his father and soon finds his corpse in the snow. Flanagan confronts the ecological processes of the forest as Aljaz's vision reveals the moment when Harry sees his father: "a great branch on top of him, his body a stiff snow-white form. It did not anger Harry that the carrion-eating devils had eaten

half his father's face and parts of his hands and arms. That was how it was. It was the same law that allowed them to snare wallabies" (*DRG* 73). Harry makes no moral distinction between humans and wildlife in terms of fatal consequences from a predatory and indifferent natural world. This may seem at odds with Harry's earlier emotions about snared wildlife suffering; however, the implied moral distinction here is that humans, unlike the rest of the natural world, have a developed sense of ethics and empathy and thus responsibility. Flanagan conjoins Harry's two reactions to death but does not equate them. By drawing on his knowledge of the basic organic processes of the forest, Harry was able to accept the mutilation of his father's body:

> But like he felt for the wallabies he felt for his father. He felt shock. The way that in death the pink bone of his father's skull looked so similar to the pink bone of the wallaby carcasses. Shocked at the way living things can be killed, and how there is no coming back from death. (*DRG* 73)

After covering his father's body with sprigs of beech Harry buries him under a stringybark tree. Again Flanagan connects the human with the forest through a correspondence with trees. To Harry "Boy's coarsely hued and textured woollen clothing made his father look more like a tree than ever. Albeit a fallen, broken tree" (*DRG* 74).

Despite the hardships endured by his ancestors, for Aljaz, the river and forest are dynamic and Edenic, continually composting and regenerating in the dawn light. Flanagan frames Aljaz's own perceptions of the forests, through prophetic interior monologue, as simultaneously sacred and erotic:

> Wet and pungent comes the smell of the damp black earth to my nostrils; of the forest dying, to be reborn as fecund rot and fungi, small and waxy, large and luminous; to be reborn as moss and myrtle seedlings, minuscule and myriad; as Huon pine sprigs, forcing their way through the crumbling damp decay, forked and knowing as a water

> diviner's stick; as the celery top saplings, looking as if a market gardener had planted them there. (*DRG* 79)

This evocative, animistic representation of the rainforest encourages readers to observe the forest closely, from a combined material and mystical perspective. Nonhuman agency is evident through analogising rainforest growth with human agents, for example, "water-diviner's stick" and "market gardener" planting. White examines Flanagan's syntax here to demonstrate how it works to emphasise the agency and vitality of the forest:

> Flanagan narrates this motion [of the forest's growth], using one long sentence with clauses divided by semi-colons to characterize each individual fungus and plant according to its own qualities and to represent the way that individual parts join together to form a larger identity. The accumulation of clauses reinforces an understanding of the forest as engaged in continual processes of change and renewal. (L. White 275)

Departing from typical Gothic stories or relaying scientific facts in *River Guide*, Flanagan is attempting to "tell a new story" by engaging readers sensually and emotionally in the dynamics of Tasmanian wilderness ecology. In this way he offers multiple perspectives for readers, through affective experiences of human/nonhuman shared materiality, to explore, imaginatively, their own ethical responses. In the narrative however, Flanagan presents the popular approach through Aljaz's thought processes—he understands that his own intuitive knowledge, like Harry's, is not what interests the punters. Aljaz could not relay the "facts, details, names of geological substrata and plants and animals," and his feelings about the spirit of the trees did not translate to their awareness (*DRG* 121). He could not convey to them "[t]hat height was not the most important attribute of a tree or what had to be scaled in order to clearly see something" (*DRG* 121). Aljaz's pity for the punters' closed minds and unawakened souls leaves readers in no doubt of the eccocentric principles expressed. His heightened perception of the dynamic and "enchanted" forest and river, by contrast, highlights the eco-regressive

mindset of the punters (ecotourists). The latter just want to confirm preconceived ideas relating more to anthropocentric issues of recreation and sustainability, rather than develop a material and/or spiritual understanding of river and forest ecology. Consequently, their preconceived approach to experiencing wilderness creates barriers for new paradigms of thought necessary for a world in the midst of global warming with all its natural and cultural implications.

Individual tree imagery (and forests), form a *leitmotif* in *River Guide*. Despite discourses of deforestation, within the novel, Flanagan also creates opportunities to "showcase" the unique trees in the rainforest and by the end of *River Guide* a snapshot history of timber works (piners), and regional botany has been absorbed through the narrative. Through Harry's perception the hard labour and living conditions of the piners are revealed. They worked *with* the river "reading" the weather and anticipating its fluctuating levels with fear and excitement. They laboured with minimal equipment: block and tackle and long irons, which enabled them to drag the pine logs to the cliffs. Once branded with initials the logs were painstakingly edged over the cliffs for their eventual journey out in the winter floods. Representation of these early timber workers (through the points-of-view of Harry and Aljaz) is sympathetic and respectful, suggesting such low impact forestry practices maintain an ethical relationship with the environment through sustainability. These early forestry practices contrast sharply with contemporary technological and mechanical harvesting both in scale and indiscriminate selection. (Flanagan uses the landscapes of Queenstown and Strahan to illustrate the effects of large scale mining and logging, an aspect of the novel I discuss below).

Aljaz's visions drift towards his father's life and he observes Harry going off to work in the forest. Through a skilful blend of erotic and surreal imagery Flanagan positions Harry as "in tune" with an evolving wilderness:

> the rainforested rivers, where his axe and saw will work in rhythm in the damp and humid closeness and the heavy sweet smells of the peat-created wet earth, among the

> myrtles, craggy and towering and bearded with hanging festoons of lichens, cracked and scabbed with fluorescent orange fungi, among the scented leatherwoods, among the pungent lime-green sassafras … among the crazed pandannis, emaciated elongated trunks betopped with pineapply heads of thrusting leaves, among the celery top pine and the lemon-tasting whitey wood and the spiralling native laurels … the prized, the Huon pine. (*DRG* 41-42)

While this is an accurate description of the material reality of a Tasmanian rainforest, through its symbolism the imaginative representation offers so much more than an historical or botanical record. In a few lines Flanagan engages all human senses through texture, scent, colour, taste and sound—the cloying stillness is in counterpoint to the rhythmic chopping and sawing of the piner. The sensual evocation is supplemented by another imaginative dimension which evokes a primordial scene through the concept of "peat-created wet earth" and images of "towering" and "bearded" trees. The "crazed pandannis" image with "emaciated elongated trunks betopped with pineapply heads of thrusting leaves" suggests a metamorphosing primitive human shape amidst the other trees. Rather than establishing a conventional trope based on the forest as the line between civilisation and wilderness Aljaz's perception serves to dissolve binary divisions between human and nonhuman nature. Aljaz's point-of-view positions the early or "shadow" human as an integrated part of the fecund atmosphere of birth and decay. This interdependence is extended to Harry, who is positioned as belonging to the environment rather than as a discordant and invasive presence because "his axe and saw will work in rhythm" with the forest.

There is also the potential in this description for a surreal (at times Gothic) interpretation of the rainforest which could represent the perspective of the punters. If focus is directed to the humid, still atmosphere, the crazed "threatening" shapes, garish colours, tangled lichen "traps" and the almost supernatural acceleration of growth, the result is a symbolic

evocation of incubating violence. Within this brief excerpt Flanagan presents multiple perspectives through empirical observation and imaginative representations of the same wilderness (the latter allied with both the ecocentric point-of-view of Aljaz and the alienated point-of-view of a tourist or punter). While there is a reference to endemic flora, Flanagan does not draw on national symbols in this extract but rather creates a forest for global resonance. Furthermore, these competing scenarios of environmental awareness allow readers to test responses and values in a fictional "moral laboratory." Would-be ecotourists, for example, may see themselves reflected in Flanagan's portraits. In turn, such expanded environmental awareness may translate into ethical practice.

The ethics underlying extraction industry management are also represented by Flanagan in *River Guide*. His representation of the landscape surrounding Queenstown, the mining community dependent on the natural resources of the region, is constructed around the *absence* of forest and the existence of pollution. Aljaz's point-of-view evokes both material and symbolic exploitation and contamination of the area:

> Queenstown with its strange, bald hills—a desert valley that had once been full of rainforest, now denuded of all vegetation by the dense plumes of sulphurous smoke which emanated from the copper mine's smelters and which, rich in heavy metals, heavy in evil riches, caressed the downwind hills and mountains in an embrace of death. His mind watched the suppurating rivers that ran in garish pus-green and bloodied rills down those sad hills. (*DRG* 44)

Words like "bald," "desert" and "denuded," evoke the rape of the landscape, an abuse resulting in barrenness. The "suppurating rivers that rain in garish pus-green and bloodied rills," and "mountains in an embrace of death" link the destruction to anthropocentric violence through the imaginative depiction of human body fluids and processes. Shared materiality, in this scenario, is depicted negatively as a hybrid form of entanglement resulting from "interacting

biological, climatic, economic, and political forces" (Alaimo qtd. in Iovino and Oppermann 75). Furthermore, the reference to the rich mineral deposits as "evil riches," leaves readers in no doubt about Aljaz's environmental politics. But does Flanagan's description of Queenstown represent the ecological conditions in the narrative timeframes and, if so, does this have relevance for 2016? While the mountain tops, above the snow line, were always barren the sulphurous fumes from the smelters, logging and bushfires are the main causal factors for the bare hills. Dramatic hairpin bends wind through the "absent forest" leading down to the valley which embraces Queenstown. The acid rain pollution from the smelters hindered regrowth but by the early seventies signs of regeneration were evident. Today revegetation is changing the landscape but unlike eucalypts, rainforest takes many centuries to regenerate. When read in the light of current climate science, Flanagan's emphasis on deforestation around Queenstown implicates climate change effects through loss of $C0_2$ storage and through carbon emissions from pulp mills, the end result of most logging. Thus his imaginative combination of cultural symbolism and material conditions achieves a prophetic warning of the lasting impact of inadequate environmental management standards.

Like Queenstown, the port of Strahan is also depicted negatively. In the 1940s, Harry alludes to darker aspects of its industrial and social history: "further away from civilisation, if that was the right name for Strahan" (*DRG* 42). Aljaz has childhood memories of Strahan which "sits like a crusty skin cancer on the flesh of south-west Tasmanian wilderness" (DRG 186). Again human and nonhuman entanglement is depicted negatively as human disease is metaphorically associated with pollution and exploitation which imaginatively links to anthropocentric destruction:

> The town looked battered and tired, like a once corpulent man dying of cancer caused by good living; the skin, once taut with fat, now hanging limp in sad, loose folds. Large, formerly elegant houses where once a family with pretensions to a rising status had

> lived, were now decrepit and rundown, occupied by several struggling spatting families. (*DRG* 188)

There is a strong judgemental tone here, implying the cancer victim deserves his fate. Once an El Dorado boomtown for prospectors and loggers, Strahan becomes a town of "strange flotsam of deflated dreams and broken hopes" as the abundant natural resources are depleted (*DRG* 188). There is little ethical ambivalence in Aljaz's and Harry's perceptions of human industry in the region.

The subsidiaries of the Franklin River region, Queenstown and Strahan, are not the only aspects of the environment which are framed through a sense of destruction and loss. Flanagan also presents extinct and endangered wildlife through a melancholy trope of absence. Triggered by the memory of "keening and lamenting" (*DRG* 259) music, Aljaz's visions extend to the time before colonisation "when the land was fat and full of trees and game" (*DRG* 257) and travel through time to the narrative present:

> From that time on, each succeeding generation found something new they could quarry to survive. First the emu disappeared, then the tigers, then the many different fishes and seals and whales and their rainbows became rare, then the rivers were stilled under dams, then the trees, and then the scallops and the abalone and the crayfish became few and were in consequence no longer the food of the poor but the waste of the rich. (*DRG* 257–58)

This emotive vignette of regional anthropogenic extinctions, within a relatively short time, also offers imaginative projections for the future through prophecy. Again exploitation of the environment is framed through images of absence, loss and disappearance: "First the emu disappeared … then the rivers were stilled under dams, then the trees …." Before colonisation abundant game sustained the relatively small Aboriginal population who hunted and gathered only for their immediate requirements—as it was plentiful there was no need to store surplus.

But Western culture capitalised on the natural resources, destroying or diminishing (either actively or passively through habitat destruction) any threats to their profits. Practices like bounty hunting, trapping, poisoning and deforestation contributed significantly to several extinctions, including that of the globally recognised thylacine or Tasmanian tiger (which I discuss in my analysis of Julia's Leigh's novel *The Hunter* in Chapter Seven, and in the film of the same name, directed by Daniel Nettheim, and which is the text for analysis in Chapter Eight.

Although these declensionist representations of aspects of the Franklin River region are sobering, Flanagan does not leave readers completely devoid of hope or comfort. Through prophecies he warns of potential loss but he also offsets historical losses with regenerative scenarios. Aljaz remembers short-lived mining towns on the west coast: "whose proud brass bands, Oddfellows Halls, Mechanics Institutes and footy teams had all proved as transitory as a westerly scud, whose grandiose hotels and smelting plants had disappeared into the peat of the rainforest …" (*DRG* 189). East Pillinger, one such port town in the Kelly Basin, had over one thousand inhabitants at the turn of the century but along with others, its prosperity was short-lived. In the following extract based on this area, and written from Aljaz's recollections, the forest is accorded ultimate power against temporal and diminutive human efforts of control:

> There a blackwood tree has grown up through the middle of an abandoned railway carriage, its broadening rising trunk over the decades elevating the carriage a yard into the air, carrying the carriage with it in its exuberant journey toward the light above the forest canopy, so the carriage now appeared to be flying in the midst of a steaming dank green profusion of tea-trees and vines and myrtles and celery top pines. No railway irons, no buildings, no material relics of the once muscular railway yard and the once bustling town remained. Nothing.
>
> Save for the carriage that flew in the rainforest. (*DRG* 189)

This extract depicts an absence of a different kind, a loss of a thriving community that relied on local extraction industries for its livelihood. From this temporal perspective human impact is insignificant, as the forest subsumes civilisation into ancient layers of peat. Aljaz expresses a sense of loss, not only towards the forests and wildlife but also towards the absence of small communities, and it is this ambivalence which highlights the complexities of kinship and the human position in the natural world.

Flanagan attributes human consciousness, interior monologue and sometimes voices to a myriad of creatures dwelling in the forest. As the rafters paddle down the river they are noticed (and then ignored) by a strolling tiger cat (a popular but inappropriate name for the spotted–tailed quoll, closely related to the extinct thylacine). On the river bank the devils also "observe the passing red rafts and their inhabitants as if they were nothing more than driftwood decorated with baubles being washed downriver by the flood" (*DRG* 214). Flanagan disrupts conventional hierarchies by reversing the subject-object gaze to position the nonhuman agents as the main observers and occupiers of the wilderness, and the rafting humans as a transient life form, diminished in size and significance by the immense gorge. Rather than merely anthropomorphising the tiger cat and the devil Flanagan's construction here extends a degree of sentient experience to the nonhuman which gestures towards a shared essential reality.

Flanagan's representation of the Franklin River World Heritage region in *River Guide* provides extensive material for contemporary environmental ethics. In particular, through the tropes of river and rainforest, Flanagan highlights existing ecological conditions of vulnerability. Moreover, the combination of symbolic and material description delivered through a blend of Romantic and contemporary ecological aesthetics creates a multi-faceted representation of the region. The themes of "absent forest" and lingering pollution represent existing ecological circumstances but also provide a prophetic expression of the dangers of further inadequate environmental management. Loss of subsidiary human communities like the

Kelly Basin, are portrayed with regret, as are anthropogenic wildlife extinctions. The sense of alienation experienced by the punters (which tends to be representative of white, city and urban dwellers generally) is contrasted with Aljaz and his Indigenous ancestors' sense of integration and kinship. This sense of integration is a keynote of *River Guide*, but how does this keynote of primordial kinship and shared material reality resonate with either past or contemporary ecological conditions in the Franklin River World Heritage area? Rather than express social harmony, *River Guide* highlights unresolved tensions still being played out, (both locally and globally) between people who want to live sustainably or preserve wild places and those who wish to profit from them regardless of ecological consequences. The trope of kinship refers to human relationships with the nonhuman and serves as a prophetic warning, a reminder of how things were between humankind and the rest of the natural world, how far we have digressed from this and how we can recapture it through fiction. Nostalgia mutates into utopian desire.

CHAPTER FOUR:

Environmental Prophecy through Fairy Tale and Magic Realism in Heather Rose's *The River Wife*

"One day the forest will be grassland and the river will be gone" (*RW* 254)

There is an expectation of pleasure associated with the telling of and the listening to a fairy tale. From a "safe" distance of "long ago and faraway," recycled stories of hybrid creatures, both tragic and prophetic, can seduce readers to suspend disbelief and enter a magical world. This pleasure, when combined with lyrical and sensual evocations of wild places, can move readers affectively as well as intellectually to observe the actual nonhuman world in new and different ways. Affective narration can engage sensory (bodily) and emotional responses and thus immerse or embody readers imaginatively in the dynamics of wilderness. The previous chapter explored hybrid aesthetics and instances of magic realism to represent kinship and shared materiality in Richard Flanagan's *River Guide.* This chapter considers Heather Rose's use of a hybrid genre as a pleasurable and effective means of contemporary environmental discourse. Rose integrates fairy tale and magic realist elements in her novel, *The River Wife*, to present an allegory of transforming human relationships with wild places. Rose's representation of inevitable changes associated with global warming and encroaching human development on wilderness reflects Kate Rigby's sense of ecoprophetic witness. Through allusions to European, Celtic and Indigenous mythology combined with classical and subversive fairy tale scenarios, Rose creates an affective narration of seductive lyrical prose, the significance of which extends beyond aesthetic pleasure to its ethical content.

The River Wife is not just one love story but several stories of love which subtly operate as environmental advocacy. Known only as "the river wife," Rose's protagonist is half-human and half-fish who walks on land by day but must return to the water, as a fish, at night. The narrative setting encompasses rainforest, riverbanks and lakes inspired by Tasmania's Central

Highlands region. Published in 2009, *The River Wife* was a Tasmanian bestseller. It is part of a trilogy of novels—including, *White Heart* (1999) and *The Butterfly Man* (2005) (long-listed for the Impac Dublin Literary Award in 2007). As an unpublished manuscript *The River Wife*, won the prestigious international Eleanor Dark Fellowship in 2007. While national reviews commonly signal a conservation theme in the novel, this is rarely expanded upon in their comments beyond its actual identification and there is no explicit mention of global warming. Of course, the format of newspaper reviews limits deeper engagement with themes, but the resulting effect tends to neutralise the potentially radical or disruptive elements which ecocritics seek to prioritise. In the absence of critical scholarship on *The River Wife* I include a sample of newspaper reviews. Diane Stubbings' review in *The Canberra Times* observes "thankfully" that Rose's "environmental message is never intrusive, sitting as it does deep in the layers of the story." Kerryn Goldsworthy's review in *The Australian* suggests *The River Wife* "is perhaps best described as a fable of environmental vandalism" but Goldsworthy does not develop this environmental point in her review (22). Her critique focuses on Roses' choice of narrative voice and allusions to other literature, fairy tales and myth. Katherine England's comments in the local *Advertiser* describe the novel as "an ecological fantasy" and cites the quote from the novel that "the music of the world had changed" (*RW* 26). England reads this phrase as a poetic reference to "unprecedented changes in the natural order" which implies her recognition of a global warming metaphor but this is not elucidated. (26). Dorothy Johnston's review in the *Sydney Morning Herald* begins from an environmentalist perspective, when she claims *The River Wife* is "A fairy tale for adults [that] has a timeless message about caring for our planet" (30). Johnston notes that "at one level, the novel is about custodianship" and that this is "in keeping with Rose's work in conservation" but then she returns to her focus on the relationship between the river wife and her human lover (30). Critical comment tends to focus on literary aesthetics, that is, the magic realist elements, the prophetic narrative voice, the

hypnotic rhythm of the prose and of course the core romantic love story. In contrast to the critics and reviewers who highlight the relationship drama or pleasurable aesthetics, I focus on Rose's *use* of these literary components to enhance environmental content.

Rose, a well-known advocate for Tasmania's environment, admits *The River Wife* is a book about conservation. She says she wrote it partly in the hope that "people [who] would never stand in a rainforest, [or] listen to a river [would] come to sense, taste, hear and feel the wonder of deep forest" (Conservation Fable). Her approach is particularly relevant in the twenty-first century, when activism is shifting to the rapidly expanding urban populations. *The River Wife,* I argue, disrupts traditional hierarchies and binary divisions between the human and the nonhuman by reorientating our relational interdependencies. Combining fairy tale and magic realist genres stylistically reflects the hybridity and entanglement between species which are central to *The River Wife*. Affective narration, understood in environmental literature as depictions of human emotional and sensory exchange used to create a sense of immersion and interdependence with the dynamic nonhuman world, convey the sensuality of the wilderness and this effect can be intensified by a prophetic narrative voice. Notions of eternal wisdom, commonly associated with prophets, generate an emotional/psychological response. In turn, this interacts with a physiological response, from the effect of the rhythmic narrative voice. Moreover, prophecy, particularly when embedded in fiction, suggests change is possible in the actual world and thus hope is restored. Such possibility counteracts, to some degree, the novel's dystopian environmental prophecies of an imminently desecrated Earth, and the reading pleasure is enhanced through optimism embedded in opportunities for change in human/nonhuman relationships.

Elements of hope and pleasure render contemporary environmental narratives (especially about climate change) more palatable. *The Hunter* film demonstrates this point through the director's choice of a more "popular" (and thus commercially successful) ending

than the bleak conclusion in Leigh's novel. Belsey argues that the power of pleasure and "play" must not be underestimated as a vehicle to disseminate serious issues (127). She believes "current criticism … neglects the pleasure of fiction" and suggests that "if fiction were not so pleasurable … its representation of social issues that concern us, among them race, gender or ecology, would matter much less" (xiii–xiv). Belsey's argument was foreshadowed some fifty years earlier when the marine biologist and conservationist Rachel Carson expressed her concerns about pollution from organic pesticides through "pastoral and apocalyptic imagery and literary allusions" in her preface to *Silent Spring* (Garrard *Ecocriticism* 1) (see pp 13 and 35–36 for earlier discussion of Carson). At the time this imaginative approach was criticised within environmental discourse and considered an inappropriate style for serious scientific matters. A decade later, in *The Comedy of Survival*, Meeker highlighted limitations of the pastoral aesthetic and argued for the picaresque novel to represent the human/nonhuman relationship. "The picaresque world is a natural system in which man is one of the animal species. …Picaresque nature is not a garden but a wilderness. Its most obvious features are multiplicity and diversity, for within the picaresque world everything is tied to everything else according to complex interdependencies which defy simplification" (Meeker, 92). The picaresque hero shuns ideologies, is a social outlaw focussed on individual survival techniques similar to those of nonhuman animals (Meeker 108). While the picaresque hero has compassion for those suffering around him, he is devoid of hope, beyond "the day-to-day business of keeping himself alive" (Meeker 113, 116).

In the twenty-first century Buell specifically recommends ecocritics increase focus on fiction and more experimental forms of writing (Buell, Heise and Thornber 434–45). Nevertheless, fictional genres can both extend and limit environmental representation as Greg Garrard points out:

> an author's choice of genre in writing about climate change is crucial: it makes some sorts of action possible and others impossible. The scale and complexity of climate science makes allegorical representation all but inevitable, yet the choice of genre also selectively heightens and constrains the story's emotional and moral range. ("Unbearable Lightness of Green" 180)

Analysis of fairy tale and magic realist genres offer opportunities to follow Buell's recommendation to include more experimental writing in ecocriticism, and to explore Garrard's ideas regarding genre limitations.

The River Wife as Hybrid Genre

Rose creates a hybrid genre in *The River Wife* by combining selected fairy tale and magic realist elements. She also fuses classical and subversive fairy tale elements in the narrative. Fairy tales evolve to suit prevailing sensibilities, frequently subverting traditional normative values. The Romantics, for example, did not intend their fairy tales to be mere escapism, but "sought to engage the reader in a serious discourse about art, philosophy, education, and love. …[C]onflict between the 'heroic' individual, often identified with Nature or natural forces, and society, … became a major theme in British Romanticism" (Zipes, *Oxford Fairy Tales* xxv). Eventually, feminist insights coupled with changing societal attitudes more generally inspired a counter-culture, which refashioned classical fairy tale conventions. Particularly since the 60s, experimental writers have overturned, or at least disturbed narrative expectations about fairy tale settings and plot lines. The result is either a complete subversion of the classical fairy tale or a fusion of both old and new forms. Jack Zipes identifies the potential of the contemporary fairy tale as a "political weapon" to challenge pervasive power structures and create new paradigms of thought (*Art of Subversion* 131). Previously a means to socialise by repressing the desires of readers, magic and metaphor now serve to "illuminate concrete utopias waiting to be realised" (Zipes, *Art of Subversion* 131).

In *Readers in Wonderland* Deborah O'Keefe notes, however, that adult motivations to explore fantasy genres may be less about the "excitement" and more about reflection: "[fantasy] offers not a simplified alternative to the complex ordinary world, but an equally complex, difficult, alternative world, dense with patterns to discover and solutions to work out and meaning to find" (20). In keeping with Belsey's position on fiction generally, O'Keefe argues that fantasy-fiction can stimulate new perspectives while avoiding comfortable and reductive answers to moral questions (22). O'Keefe suggests the pleasure factor can be increased through the elements of "challenge and fun" (21) but she also reminds us that "fantasy does not preclude sorrow and pain" (73–75). In *The River Wife* the pleasurable experiences of reading engage readers in "play" through a combination of fairy tale and magic realism elements, that in turn serve as persuasive means to disseminate serious environmental issues.

In accord with the classical fairy tale genre, the protagonist—the river wife—has no other name and the location is undisclosed. Yet, contemporary and primordial senses of time merge subtly, while current concepts of racial and species hybridity and entanglement resonate with ancient ones of metamorphosis. But there are no gingerbread houses and fairy princesses in *The River Wife* and no witches or wolves (or even thylacines!) ready to prey on children who become lost in the rainforest. A hybrid talking fish and a dynamic rainforest setting, however, echo some elements of the enchanted forests of classical tales. In *The River Wife* these particular transformations and animistic elements operate as magic realism rather than pure fantasy. Though magic realism is a "a branch of the fantastic" (Sieber 177), the degree of "real world" detail sets it apart from general fantasy; the latter tending to create an entirely new alternative world. Magic realism in *The River Wife* is best captured by Chris Baldick's definition: "a kind of modern fiction in which fabulous and fantastical events are included in a narrative that otherwise maintains the 'reliable' tone of objective realistic report" (194). Magic realism also tends to "draw upon the energies of fable, folktale and myth while retaining a

strong contemporary social relevance" (Baldick 194). By day the river wife assumes human form, walks by the river bank and shares conversation about wilderness "ecology," but at night she transforms into a fish and inhabits the river. Magic realism allows Rose to juxtapose ideas (and ideals) of primeval wilderness and wild areas under threat today, but with a sense of seamless temporal unity. A restrained contemporary keynote is established through references to modern "city" commodities, to global warming and encroaching human development on wilderness. Allegorical interpretation of the narrative and relationships also intensify resonance with contemporary environmental concerns.

Although the location of the story is not revealed *The River Wife* was partly written during a wilderness writers' residency in the Central Highlands of Tasmania. Rose admits the novel is set in Tasmania, but Johnston observes that "the rivers, lakes and mountains have a universal feel" ("Conservation" 30). (It is interesting that with the exception of a cockatoo there is no representation of specific species of wildlife in *The River Wife*—we are not told, for example, what kind of fish the river wife is—perhaps because it would identify the locale and thus break the universal "spell" Rose is casting). While this unnamed place allows many readers to set aside scepticism and enter the enchanting, supernatural world of the river wife, for local readers, Rose's revelation about the Tasmanian setting may add a further pleasurable element of speculation and projection regarding specific locations. Certainly the Ouse River, or the internationally recognised Shannon River, "characterised by 'dry fly' artists as 'the finest dry fly fishing' in the Southern Hemisphere," suggest sources of inspiration (Jetson 89). For international readers, the rainforest and alpine imagery in *The River Wife* resonates in a familiar yet strange way with areas like the Cairngorms in Scotland, the misty lakes and moorlands of Yorkshire (England) and Connemara (Ireland) or the forests of Southern and Central Europe. Yet this familiar Romantic aesthetic is fractured by "strange" hybrid creatures and the stain of violent colonisation from the recent past. While the hypnotic narrative voice of the river wife

leads readers into an enchanted and seemingly peaceful ecosphere human violence, reprisal and the destructive power of Gaia also inform her melancholy tale.

The River Wife's Relationships as Environmental Tropes

The river wife is embodied in the natural world, and I interpret her character as a trope for eccocentrism: "I have never known how to be other than the river. … My name is the river and the river is my name" (*RW* 40). Consequently, I focus my interpretation of her relationships at the level of allegory, and read them primarily as modes of dwelling within wild places.

As in the classical Hans Christian Andersen tale of *The Little Mermaid* relationships between supernatural beings and humans are depicted as problematic if not tragic. The river wife falls in love with Wilson James, a human, which leads to inevitable tragedy for them both. In addition to the romantic relationships with her human lover and her nonhuman husband, the Winter King, the relationship between the river wife and her human father is also portrayed, the latter with exquisite tenderness. Each character and subsequent love story symbolically represents different ways of reading the human (or nonhuman) relationship to the environment. Rose also portrays poignant love stories between river wives and their daughters as separations and reconciliations occur. But the leading love story (generally overlooked by critics) is that of the river wife's ancestral relationship and custodianship of the river and surrounding forest.

One by one the river wife is separated from everything she loves, her mother, her father, her husband and daughter, her lover and ultimately her eternal bond with the river and rainforest. I focus on four relationships: her hybrid father, her nonhuman husband, her human lover and her river ancestor. Each of these emotional attachments symbolise different ways of being or dwelling in the wilderness but ultimately all are entangled. The river wife understands that all species share a common origin and that lived experience involves corporeal and mystical dimensions: "There is wonder in this world that has no words. It is the wonder of things visible and invisible, human and other. I am not one or the other, the world is not one or the other, we

are both" (*RW* 254). Ultimately, Rose captures the uneasy relationship between the human and nonhuman but there are tensions, at times, in her approach. The ecocentric ethic which underpins her text is fractured occasionally by seemingly conservative notions of wilderness that could be interpreted to suggest human presence is unnecessary disturbance. It becomes apparent, however, after close reading, that the quality of the relationship between human and nonhuman is of primary concern. As I "untangle" some of these "entanglements" individual characters in *The River Wife* can be read as reflections of contemporary environmental debates.

Father as Transforming Consciousness

Rose's narrative conveys Rigby's warning that human relationships with the nonhuman world can, and need, to change if we are to avoid environmental disaster. An interspecies union (between the river wife's human father and fish mother) and their resulting hybrid offspring, establishes the dissolution of traditional human and nonhuman boundaries as a major theme in the novel. From her supernatural conception the river wife's hybrid form also metaphorically suggests the tangle of connections inherent in all life forms.

Rose's river wives combine stereotypically feminine traits like intuition and nurturing with characteristics of leadership and empowerment. Courage and independence are essential for river wives. For reasons not disclosed until the end of the narrative, the river wife's mother is an absent parent for most of her daughter's life. Father became the child's constant companion, as she swam beside him, while he walked the river banks. Like a Romantic version of classical Pan her "father played a flute he had fashioned from a finger of tree … All the forest stopped to listen" (*RW* 14). Through a process of lived experience and intuitive knowledge the river wife's father (referred to just as "Father" in the novel) transforms his detached rationalist perceptions of the nonhuman Other into an ecocentric sensibility. His transformation of consciousness culminates in his physical metamorphosis into a tree. A complex dynamic character, father is a metaphor for change and hope for a more ecocentric

future. Past education and social culture, patterns from white Western colonial experiences, inform father's early life in the forest. But as the narrative unfolds (retrospectively at times) his eccocentric sensibility develops. In old age, when he metamorphoses into a tree, he takes root in the river bank so he can remain close to his daughter. Father "had slipped so far from his kinsfolk to become a man of the earth" (*RW* 14). Father's transformation imaginatively suggests environmental transgressions from the past can be overcome and new ways of being in the environment can be learned as humans adapt.

Historical fragments of father's life allude to discourses of human violence and subjugation of land, and his initial relationship to the wilderness suggests a culture/nature division dominates. During father's early years in the forest there are distinct echoes of Henry David Thoreau's "life in the woods." Initially Father's focus is on naturalist observations and his primary impulse for living in the woods is to undergo a spiritual renewal through nature. Like Thoreau, father constructed his home from local materials, becoming skilful at exploiting the land's resources for survival and comfort; he made the walls from riverbed stones and the roof beams and furniture from nearby trees. Rose's description of the house as "extended" natural environment evokes a sense of shared materiality that portrays father's home more as habitat than house. Father's initial detachment from the nonhuman world is obscured, in part, by his style of home and his self-sufficiency. Furthermore, the river wife's tendency to describe father physically, in terms of environmental features, also evokes an ecocentric ethos. The gentle tone of her narration is, superficially at least, uncritical as she describes father through the unconditional love of a child/daughter. "My father's face softened into the kindness of moss that grows in the furrows of trees and asks for nothing but dappled light and the touch of rain" (*RW* 22). Yet there is an underlying tension between her love for him (and his protectiveness of her) and his early interaction with the nonhuman world especially given his daughter is half fish. Father made lures for "fish he would never catch" and sold them in the town (9). He

established a "walled garden [where] he grew all manner of root and plant, and in the forest he hunted all the creatures that tasted good" (6). This suggests an oblique disapproval of the killing of wildlife for two reasons. First, because Rose makes clear he had an alternative to animal flesh through his walled garden and large stores of preserved food and second, the phrase "all creatures that tasted good" suggests that when he hunted he discriminated between wildlife on the basis of culinary pleasure rather than his own basic survival needs or biodiversity requirements.

Like Thoreau, father's early understanding of the wilderness is framed through rationalist and botanical observations. All textual indications are that he adopts Carolus Linnaeus' bionominal plant taxonomies based on a hierarchy of species to record, name, and catalogue the flora and fauna of the river region (Fara 19–20). The human system of naming places and topographical features is one the river wife ultimately rejects as diminishing: "Every fish is marked a different way. The bark of each tree has a pattern that is unique … it is not the same because its name is the same" (*RW* 82). Enlightenment ideals eventually yield to a more immersive experience for father: "'I am done with the words of the world and now I am with the world'" (*RW* 49). He finds himself "strangely alone, like a branch which has fallen from its tree into the river and been washed ashore far away on the river's edge" (*RW* 50). This image prefigures his final physical metamorphosis but also his deeper emotional and psychological transformation as he develops ecological wisdom: "[T]his old branch finds that it is part and has been part of all things, not simply the tree. If I am to stay here with you and not grow old as men do, then I must let go of what I anticipate, and step into whatever may be beyond this limited knowledge I have collected from the books I have read" (*RW* 50). He is aware of his cultural limitations but also of his own changing sensibilities: "How late it has come, this understanding that I have been entirely shaped by my human brain and all the limitations it has. How far we might go if we could reach beyond our form …" (*RW* 55).

Father's transformation includes an unexplained journey beyond the mountains. After the river wife's marriage, he leaves her in the care of her husband, the Winter King. The climate changes, however, finally preventing the Winter King visiting the river wife, and her life becomes solitary and lonely. Nine years pass before father returns as an old man. Although mortal, father swears he will never leave her and when his time on Earth as a human comes to an end his life-force transforms into a tree. After several days of standing still with his feet in the nearby river, he completes his metamorphosis:

> Within a season he was no different to the forest. Moss and lichen grew upon him. Golden toadstools sprang up in the earth around him and others grew fawn and pale in his bark. Many birds have been born in his branches and many creatures have sheltered in the quiet of his leaves. Still he stands there on the riverbank. Still love is possible. Some love never ends. (*RW* 26)

Rose's language in this passage evokes the sensory textures of the forest vegetation and combines them with human qualities to achieve a sense of shared materiality. Her father's skin becomes "his bark," his limbs become branches and his hair is represented by leaves. His enduring love for his daughter is symbolised by the longevity and strength of the tree. For ecocriticism, this transformation has a further dimension in terms of a ecocentrism. Mutability of the human form and its adaptability towards a potentially concordant existence with the nonhuman world is symbolised through father's metamorphosis.

In terms of the narrative and the father/daughter love story, this transformation achieves a satisfying conclusion to father's "death," a death necessitated logically as long as he retains his human form. While it also goes some way towards a symbolic union between the human and nonhuman world this final relationship is not without a sense of loss and melancholy. Belsey's theory about "stand-ins" affords some insight into the poignant affect created by father's ultimate transformation. Belsey gives several examples from Ovid where

metamorphosis records "a projected substitution, as the object of desire gives way to a stand-in that at once symbolises and fails to match what is lost. This emblem may be pleasing or precious, but it's not the thing itself" (113). Because the projected substitution "neither replicates nor replaces … the difference between the two sustains their longing" (Belsey 113). In ecocritical terms the "longing" or desire is for an interdependent, sustainable ecocentric relationship between the human and nonhuman world symbolised by father's metamorphosis into a tree. In terms of *The River Wife*, the river wife's own hybrid form suggests some sense of kindred spirit connection is still possible with her father's nonhuman form. For readers, longing and desire interact with hope for a more ecocentric relationship.

Stories like *The River Wife* can imaginatively inspire humans to care for the flourishing of wilderness and the nonhuman world overall. Belsey reinforces the significance of fiction in general, and metamorphosis in particular, as means to engage readers affectively in actual social and environmental issues: "Such stories put on display a desire that at once resists and resigns itself to deprivation and substitution. In this way, they offer to please by echoing in signifying practice the loss of the real, compensated but not repaired by the symbol" (113). While Thoreau returns to society after his experimental two years in the woods Rose's character, Father, ultimately evolves into a nonhuman life-form. His transformation from Linnaean naturalist to eccocentrist and finally to a tree by the river symbolises the possibility of change for humans from colonial and consumerist impulses to more ecocentric and sustainable ethics. The character of father in *The River Wife* optimistically suggests new ways of being in the environment can be learned and many past transgressions can be overcome as humans adapt to future change.

Husband, The Winter King, as Environmental Prophet

The character of the Winter King, the river-wife's "seasonal" husband, is pivotal for the environmental theme which underpins *The River Wife*. The character exemplifies many theoretical points related to literary aesthetics which I set out in the Introduction. Most significant are the problematic representation of climate change, generating hope through prophecy, "eco-monsters" and the importance of play and pleasure to express serious issues, and the concept of entanglement expressed through fictional hybrid forms.

The love story of the river wife and her husband the Winter King is told retrospectively as fragments throughout the narrative. In the years that father is absent, the river wife's loneliness is eased by the Winter King. Eventually they have a daughter, who inherits the gift of transformation and her father's preference for cold climate. Part fish, the child is not bound to the life of a river wife and ultimately choses to live with her father. Each year the Winter King visits the river wife, "on the first day of deep snow" and departs "at snowmelt to return to his land where spring and summer never visited (*RW* 24).

The handful of reviews of *The River Wife* that identify conservation as a main theme do not analyse it in any depth and climate change discourse is absent. In contrast I identify the character of the Winter King as a very perceptible metaphor for global warming which extends into allegory as the story of his relationship with the river wife unfolds. His seasonal visits, his prophecies about the changing climate, "the old cycles are changing" and his final retreat to the cold North, poetically encapsulate actual and anticipated effects of climate change on Earth (115). My analysis tackles the deficit identified by Timothy Clark: "while global warming is prominent in contemporary environmental writing … literary criticism rarely directly addresses the topic" (10). Clark suggests this relative absence is to do with "the novelty and scope" of global warming and that previous bioregional or nationalistic approaches to ecocriticism are deficient in scale (11). In effect the Winter King has two "homes" or locations, one in the far

land of blue ice and the other the river area where his wife lives. This double aspect goes some way to overcoming the problems of scale associated with representing climate change identified by Clark. The Winter King may come from a different hemisphere (or a different planet) but the "shifting ecologies" and "ecological citizenship" underpinning his prophetic visions link the local to the global (Potter and Starr 2). What is vital for climate change representation, according to Potter and Starr, is that "we see ourselves as in the world in terms *both* concrete *and* as participants in networks that stretch beyond what is right here and now, into other places, other systems, other times and other lives" (7). Both local and global perspectives inform the Winter King's prophecies, which warn the river wife (and readers) that "the music of the world had changed" (*RW* 115).

The Winter King's existence is threatened by heat, and this particular vulnerability suggests islands and coastlines on Earth, that are at risk from global warming due to rising sea levels. Like much of the contemporary world's population the river wife did not understand the warning signs because they did not immediately threaten her. She observed, but did not comprehend the impact of the changing patterns. Consequently, she did not understand the significance or reason for her husband's departure until long after he had gone. She recounts his last visit where, amidst the shared love and laughter, he warns her of the changing environmental conditions. His people needed to retreat as "deep cold abandoned the forest" (*RW* 27–28). The river wife waited for him "longer than some humans live, winter after winter," but their daughter and he and his friends never returned (*RW* 154). Abandoned to a solitary existence the river wife's personal loss of her husband and daughter allegorically infuses the narrative with a profound sense of grief for the future of the human and nonhuman world as the climate changes.

As the years passed the Winter King's prophecies are realised. Small incremental changes replaced seasonal patterns as the chill in the forest diminished and water sources wither.

Throughout the river wife's tale, Rose includes poetic but unmistakable references to global warming: "No snow lay heavy upon the house. The lakes no longer froze. And the Winter King came no more to the forest" (*RW* 28). The river wife remembers his departure and his warning that "The old cycles are changing" (*RW* 115). Towards the end of the novel, when the river wife reconnects with her ancestors, her own prophetic visions become apocalyptic. The effects of global warming and lack of custodianship have led to a dying planet:

> The river was changed beyond recognition. No longer the rushing water and falling rain, the mist in the air shrouding the pathways of water and trees. No longer the vast standing trees from the mountain's girth to the furthest hills and valleys. Dry grasslands stretched away as far as I could see. Barren was the land and bare the hills. The river was gone and the stories were scattered. The songs were broken. The sky spun heat and storm. (*RW* 238)

This bleak vision is in accord with Rigby's discussion of the anthropocene and ecocide in which she offers two possibilities—either we continue with our current destruction, risking our own extinction or we change and begin to care for the nonhuman as an extension of our own being ("Anthropocene" 1).

Rigby argues for the efficacy of the literary mode of "prophetic witness" through the disclosure of imminent catastrophe, if humans don't reconcile development with the Earth. Prophecy delivers warning and laments of things to come, but its fictional status allows for change in the actual world. Prophecies delivered by the Winter King and the river wife operate in this way—they lament the destruction of the earth but allow for hope through change in human behaviour towards the nonhuman world. Hope lies in diminishing negative effects, and finally, adaptation to a changing world organised around the principles of ecocentrism. Rose's literary aesthetics, including the pleasurable fairy tale and magic realist elements, render the environmental theme more oblique than confronting. A potential tone of "green imperialism"

is offset through the use of metaphor, allegory and a lyrical prose style which relies on seduction more than provocation to draw readers into the narrative world it creates.

Rose's story of the river wife's personal loss of the Winter King, their daughter and the river wife's river habitat works allegorically, in part, because the fairy tale genre resists specific locations and timeframes. Interpreted as contemporary narrative, as deforestation increases and sea levels rise in the actual world, Rose's reference to ubiquitous geographical and ecological features like "hills," "valleys," "trees" and "land" infer losses for many global communities as a result of climate change (*RW* 238). Of course, not all places in the world are disadvantaged by global warming, as Garrard points out when he warns against overarching narratives that assume global norms: "apocalyptic fictions misrepresent the impacts of climate change as uniformly dire" (Hayden and Garrard 122). Rose, however, seeks to generate awareness and compassion for the predicament of human and nonhuman life forms regardless of nationality, species or region. Rose's approach is designed to engage readers at a sensory and affective level rather than with rational facts. Potter emphasises "the value of the latter [poetic representation] … to overcome the instrumentality of science in order to work on affective rather than rational levels" ("Climate Change" 1). Ultimately these allegorical interpretations of loss involving the planet's ecological health and biodiversity (including the possibility of the extinction of life on earth, human and otherwise) deepen the novel's symbolic meaning.

In addition to prophesying climate change, the Winter King's hybrid form represents further entanglement and correspondence between human and nonhuman life forms: "He had walked as a bear, and he walked sometimes in the form of a man, and sometimes his form was falling snow … but above all he was winter's guardian" (*RW* 113–114). Although his transformations introduce an element of play into the tale, there is also something of the "monster" about the Winter King, in bear form particularly, given that he is a portent of impending disaster. The river wife suggests "it amused him to be a bear with a fish he could

love and not eat" but she also notes that: "He would laugh as he plucked trout from the river and ate them whole, though this unsettled me" (*RW* 114–115). The river wife's discomfort, as she observed her husband eat a fish, remains unexplained in the narrative. Her reaction, of being "unsettled" is surprisingly "underplayed" which again suggests Rose's difficulty in establishing moral divisions between fish (*RW* 115). It also exemplifies one of the conceptual complexities within the text—the river wife's own hybrid existence—which can both enhance and dilute her responses and thus be both a strength and a limitation for the narrative. The Winter King character, however, is less ambiguous in terms of environmental ethics underpinning the text. Ultimately, the "monster-aspect" of the Winter King is presented more as benign and comic than menacing. His character functions as a warning for global warming but without any apparent responsibility for the environmental disaster.

The Winter King character can be read ecocritically in a range of ways from representations of climate change to the underlying kinship between all life forms—human and nonhuman. His hybrid form is typical in fairy tale and magic realist narratives. While Garrard reminds us that the "question of *literary genre"* ("Lightness of Green" 179) is not the most pressing issue he also points out that analysing genres "from either writer's or the critic's point of view will help to highlight their significance for environmental representation generally, and for climate change in particular" (*Teaching Ecocriticism* 122). Rather than constraining the story's emotional and moral range, The Winter King's character is effective as a "political weapon." Read allegorically his prophecies heighten the need for climate action in the actual world. When embedded within the seductive prose of Rose's hybrid genre the Winter King's bleak warning is delivered more pleasurably, than through scientific and statistical reports, which are the usual source for understanding contemporary environmental concerns.

Human Lover, Wilson James, as Environmental Threat

The river wife's relationship with Wilson James, her human lover, is the core romantic relationship in the novel and dominates popular and critical reviews. The character of Wilson James is the most complex to unpick because it is inherently contradictory—embracing the human capacity for both environmental vandalism and environmental conservation. In this way it evokes both the realities and the potential of human interaction with wild places. I interpret Wilson James primarily as a metaphor to represent the enticements and more immediate gratifications of the contemporary world and the potential for human development to destroy natural patterns.

As the Earth warms human development expands into the wilderness resulting in further deforestation around the river: "Humans came as father had said they would. I watched the houses being built. One after another as the years worked upon the forest, as trees grew and fell, humans took root upon the lake's edge" (*RW* 29). Father warned his daughter against associating with his own kind: "They are as different from you as rock is to water … you must promise not to choose one for friendship, for I fear it would be the end of all that is here, and the river itself and every story within it would be lost" (*RW* 23). Rose's depiction of contemporary humans visiting or settling in the wilderness and of the towns and cities of their origins tend to be binary and repeat Romantic patterns of purity and corruption. (I use "contemporary" here in the sense of humans who twenty-first-century Westerners could identify with culturally). "Father said town was full of things people needed. He said once you started needing things from town, you never stopped" (*RW* 104). This culture/nature divide, where contemporary humans are portrayed as alien to the wilderness, creates a contrasting "fracture" to the seamless co-existence of the hybrid river wife and her now transformed human father.

Throughout *The River Wife* Rose maintains an ethical tension between city and wilderness, through the traumatic personal histories of father and Wilson James. While father's background resonates with colonial white settlers, Wilson James is a metaphor for contemporary consumerism and environmental destruction. Father's fears for his daughter are "realised" through Wilson James: human and from "town" he is dependent on tobacco, alcohol and other goods. From father's reformed point-of-view these particular dependencies may represent "vices," but for Rose's narration they work more metaphorically as general consumerism. Wilson James is a likeable character who is doing his best to cope with personal and professional loss: a person with whom many of us could identify. He rents a cottage by the lake, hoping the idyllic setting will inspire his writing, and ease his grief after his son's death.

Initially Wilson James brings love and happiness for the river wife and they have a mutually fulfilling relationship. They meet one spring (the season symbolising romance and reproduction), when the river wife finds him asleep "in the unrolling fronds of ferns" by the river (*RW* 31). She is immediately attracted to him and he is portrayed through her desire. She is bewitched by his physical beauty: "There was something about the way his eyelashes lay upon his cheeks as he slept" (*RW* 31). She reaches out and strokes his face. Usually she is invisible to humans—"at most he might feel a passing breeze"— but he responds to her touch and awakens from deep sleep (*RW* 32). This scenario subverts elements of the classic fairy tale *Sleeping Beauty*. Instead of the stereotypical beautiful and passive woman being "discovered" and "rescued," gender roles are reversed in *The River Wife*. Ultimately, the river wife's level of commitment in love is not returned. Instead Wilson James chooses to retain his human form at the cost of their relationship and the river wife's mortality. Mythical resonance with Narcissus and Echo enhances the interpretative scope of the narrative while the more fashionable/popular romantic aspects of their love story maintain resonance for contemporary mainstream audiences.

When he arrives Wilson James is not in tune with the wild environment—he is portrayed, through the river wife's point-of-view—as an invasion, which she initially views with some humour. This "disturbance" is juxtaposed with the eccocentric ethos, which is embedded in the character and lifestyle of the Winter King, the river wife and her father in his later years. Wilson James is "a flash of colour in the forest" … "the sound of twigs breaking, … . He stepped about the forest like a large animal" (*RW* 57). Lacking the skill to live off the land he makes regular journeys to the town for supplies. Through his depiction as one of the "encroaching" humans, his "corruption" of the river wife, his continual need for city consumables and his lack of sensitivity to the wilderness environment, Wilson James is cast as a threat both to the environment and to the river wife's role as custodian. Rose does not portray all humans as destructive, but initially Wilson James represents the majority who have not learned to live sustainably by developing an ecocentric sensibility.

Gradually the river wife and Wilson James become lovers. His anxious and melancholy moods, in part a legacy of his previous urban lifestyle, fade. One day he visits the stone house where the river wife grew up and, after exploring the remnants of father's life, he settles into his chair by the fireplace. One day she tells him a story and it is as if a spell has been cast. Wilson James falls asleep by the fireplace and a sense of enchantment is evoked as "the colours of his memories floated about him like the dust of pollen in spring air" (*RW* 88). The river wife sat beside him and the fire kindled her own memories "of Father and weather and the Winter King coming in from the snow" (*RW* 89). The implication is that her past losses have been restored through this forbidden relationship and the scene symbolises the development of their romantic attraction into a mature love. As spring turns to summer her care and love of the river is supplanted by her human attachment which father had cautioned her against. Wilson James flourishes under her care but the river wife's own well-being diminishes. The tragedy of mismatched species prophesised by her father begins to play out: "I saw too late, too long into

the journey, that somehow I had given away some part of myself to make room for him" (*RW* 204).

As the seasons pass, scales form on Wilson James' ankle and then along his spine. When he realises he is going to metamorphose into a fish he confesses that he is "not that brave" and the river wife chooses to trade her eternal life (and the custodianship of the river) to save his human form. Ultimately, like Narcissus, his love for himself is stronger than his love for the river wife, and he falls short of her father's commitment to stay with her forever. The transient joy of romance and companionship with a forbidden human gives way to a deep grief due to her loss of connection with her two loves—Wilson James and the river (also her extended self). Perhaps the most significant aspect of the river wife's choice is that she chooses humanity (as represented by her human lover) over the environment which is portrayed as a seamless part of her own identity: "My name is the river and the river is my name" (*RW* 40). I interpret her dilemma is a metaphorical expression of the complexity associated with living sustainably in the contemporary Western world. The consequences of her decision are dire both for herself and the environment. As prophecy, however, they serve as inspiration as well as warnings and opportunities for lament. The dynamic aesthetic combination of prophetic narration and magic realist elements transform sorrow into hope through the potential for altered environmental sensibilities in the actual human world.

The River as Ancestor

From my particular perspective, which emphasises kinship connections and shared materiality, the river wife's relationship with the environment is the significant love story in *The River Wife*. Through her hybrid form the river wife is already embodied in the nonhuman. Despite her metamorphoses, she is never just a woman, or just a fish, but rather she is also the river, which metaphorically represents the environment as an extension of her own form. She can be material, fluid or spiritual as she transforms, but the significant factor

for her identity is that she is the progeny of the environment itself: "I am of the earth and of the river" (*RW* 177). In terms of magic and its interaction with "realism," her mutable form resonates with Edward O. Wilson's explanation about the genetic unity of life: "all organisms have descended from the same distant ancestral life form" (*Future of Life* 131). The river wife's character embodies the concept of shared materiality through the representation of the narrative environment as part of her own health and wellbeing.

The river wife's responsibility is to heal and protect the river and adjoining banks, glades and forest and the life forms which structure part of the ecosystem. Species divisions dissolve at times as the river wife merges qualities of humans and trees (also a technique utilised by Flanagan in constructing his protagonist, Aljaz Cosini in *River Guide*.). When the river wife observes Wilson James sleeping, his human form appears weak and malnourished. Her evaluation is derived from tree imagery as an indicator of optimal health: "He had none of the uprightness of a tree nor the form of a branch about his arms and legs" (*RW* 47).

In human form the river wife walks by the river in daylight and at dusk returns to the moonpool as a fish. As she casts her incantations over the landscape her character alludes to multiple personae ranging from literary history to popular contemporary culture. These include mother-nature (Gaia from Greek mythology), an Indigenous Ancestral or Spirit Being like the Yawk Yawk maidens of Arnhem Land, a neo-pagan "green witch" or perhaps Aiushtha the enchantress of the woods (from the computer game "Death of the Ancients").

Although Rose's tale draws widely from European and Indigenous mythology and folklore she avoids the classical forest of fear and peril, and the Gothic stereotype of Tasmanian wilderness. Instead of depicting the wilderness as threatening her sensory and lyrical portrayals, under the river wife's custodianship, represent it as nurturing and benign. At times Rose expresses its ambient qualities through the pastoral trope of *locus amoenus* (as Nettheim does on occasions in the film version of *The Hunter*). Her use of the pastoral in *The River Wife*

echoes that of Elizabethan poet Edmund Spenser, and in turn the classical texts that he draws on. Spenser's description of the Bower of Bliss in *The Faerie Queene*, for example, corresponds remarkably in its evocation of a garden paradise. Spenser notes the lyricism of the natural world as: "a most melodious sound/ … [where] there consorted in one harmonee,/ Birdes, voyces, instruments, windes, waters, all agree" [P]aradise [*The Faerie Queene* 11.xiii.70 ff] (Smith and Selincourt 138). Like Spenser, Rose adopts the classical *locus amoenus* features of trees, water, and grassland. In addition, Rose enhances her affective narration through the hypnotic cadence of her prose:

> The river wound its song about us and the small creatures of forest and water went about their days as heat began to fill the air. The ferns bent to the river and whispered shade and light, shade and light. The grasses stood upright, unfolding from the earth, reaching for a breath of breeze to give them movement. Bushes white with flowers bowed and dipped, rustling with the wings of birds seeking nectar. Far above, the heads of the tallest trees rumbled with coming weather. (*RW* 94)

Whereas Spenser's depiction of the Bower of Bliss, the home of an Enchantress, functions as moralising against erotic temptation, Rose's pastoral trope subverts this anthropocentric focus to entice the reader into the sensual pleasures of the forest as an end in itself. There is tension, however, conscious or otherwise, embedded in the layers of interpretation. Rose's passage certainly accords with her stated intention to educate her target audience (city dwellers) to the sensory experience of a rainforest but this description is positioned in the narrative context of the stirring sexual attraction between the river wife and her human lover. The enticements of the forest, in this immediate context, can also be read to suggest the growing "temptation" Wilson James presents to her as competition for her love and responsibility to the river. The chapter ends with the river wife questioning the nature and purpose of her own restless energy. The Elizabethan (and by extension classical) comparison, combined with the earlier discussed

literary and cultural allusions, deepen intellectual and emotional connections which, in turn, potentially enhance reading pleasure.

Given her relational and embedded existence in the rest of the natural world, a "walk in the woods" with the river wife is a very different experience to the quintessential literary environmental "excursion" around Walden with Thoreau, for example, (or around the river with father when she was a child). Both these tropes, her relationship with the river and her father, are metaphors for different ways of being in the natural world. Rose's choice of fairy tale and magic realism which privileges poetic vision over empirical observation avoids eco-regressive Romantic preoccupation with human spiritual wellbeing. She undermines this potentially alienating response to the natural world through the river wife's and *The River Wife's* emphasis on ecological health rather than merely anthropocentric flourishing.

Like Richard Flanagan in *River Guide*, Rose also draws from Indigenous myths to tell her tale. Stories of kinship extend to ancestral bonds which may take many different and mutable life-forms. The river wife's kinship with river and rainforest is reminiscent of many indigenous relationships with the land including those of both North American Indians and the Australian Aborigines. The Australian correspondence is apparent through several examples in the text. From the beginning of *The River Wife* Rose signals the Indigenous ancestral thread of the narrative. As a child walking the river banks with father, the river wife notices "markings on stone of circle, dot, hand-print, circle. The markings were from the old people who are no longer here, but their songs are in the rain and in the river still" (*RW* 13). The river wife's conception of time is not based on a human lifespan but rather it is premised on an unbroken ancestral connection. She explains to Wilson James: "we have been here and always here before your people were ever upon this earth" (*RW* 66). The Indigenous conception of time expressed by the river wife is underpinned by topographical and mythological evidence from local Tasmanian history. In *Grease and Ochre* Patsy Cameron points out in her discussion of

ancient peoples and ancient landscapes of Tasmania "to see Country as the ancestors did in the distant and recent past is extremely powerful as many landmarks and environments have not changed since the sea level reached the current coastline some 8,000 years ago" (xiv). The river wife's journey to "the oldest ones," in the Lake of Time resonates with aspects of Indigenous ancestral myth (*RW* 214). Howard Morphy's explanation of the concept of time in The Dreaming further contextualises Rose's imaginative dimensions of time:

> The Dreaming exist independently of the linear time of everyday life and the temporal sequence of historical events. Indeed, the Dreaming is as much a dimension of reality as a period of time. … But the Dreamtime has never ceased to exist, and from the viewpoint of the present it is as much a feature of the future as it is of the past. … [and is] as concerned with space as with time — it refers to origins and powers that are located in places and things. (68)

This concept of time as a seamless blend of past, present and future fits neatly with the elements of fairy tale genre, and with the river wife's search for her ancestors.

Traditionally river wives sing the river and the forest into being and into health. The idea of 'singing the river' creates an allusion here to Australian Aboriginal culture. Aboriginal stories and songs of creation imaginatively combine ancestral beings with features of the landscape in a material and spiritual way. They are often lyrical and poetic observations of environmental health and its impact on human wellbeing (see Morphy, 76, 89, 91). These ancestral beings can also sustain kinship links through "spirit conception" (Kleinert 67). When, as a child, the river wife begins her singing her mother immediately recognises it. Rose evokes a sense of increasing enchantment for father when he witnesses his daughter's rite of passage: "When your singing started it was more like an extension of the conversation we'd been having. But the light in the forest had changed … the wind, it was suddenly full of voices, old and young, kind and full of tears (72–73).

Further imaginative connection can be made to Aboriginal culture through the *tyereelore* - clanswomen who married white sealers from the Bass Strait Islands. They lived a "hybrid" lifestyle "comprising a blend of clan and European traditions" but their primary role was "managing the islands' resources" (Cameron 122). Although the relationship between Tasmanian Aboriginal women and sealers is often depicted as one of exploitation and violence, Patsy Cameron, an Indigenous Tasmanian historian, argues that more respectful intimacies and relationships were also apparent. Cameron explains that by using their traditional skills these women were far more useful than European women would have been (122). Like the river wives in Rose's fairy tale these island wives were responsible for the health and sustainability of the environment.

As a final, although by no means exhaustive, example, a further allusion to Tasmanian Indigenous culture can be drawn from the significance of trees in terms of ancestral remains and spirits. The practice of "entombment in the burnt-out hollows of living trees, with the deceased being placed upright using lengths of brushwood" is particularly interesting when viewed in the light of father's final transformation into a tree in *The River Wife* (Cameron 31). The coastal Tasmanian Indigenous people chose living trees for this burial ritual which suggests a belief in the transfer of energy between the spirits of the dead humans and the living nonhuman species. Consequently, both Aboriginal culture and the fictional world of the river wife demonstrate the entanglement of all life forms by eroding the boundaries between species and featuring hybrid life forms. Morphy's reflections on Aboriginal creation myths, are pertinent to *The River Wife* implication of common origin of all life-forms:

> As the process is traced back in time the differences between things fade and the connections emerge; humans are not so different from animals after all, and the shapes of the mountains represent the imprint of time and the effect of action on the landscape. Totemism—the connection between human beings and animal species—is partly the

> expression of a belief in the common origin of things and the sharing of substance across the universe. (76)

In her journey to her ancestors the river wife reconnects with her mother. During their reconciliation her mother shares stories of their ancestors and their destiny: "on the shores of a lake was a woman who had sung the river for all time, for this was her duty. She was bound by a story older than time and the water of the world was full of her songs. …she was a fish by night and a woman by day" (*RW* 233). Like her ancestors, the river wife sings the environment into health or laments its destruction. Rose recreates this song through the hypnotic cadences of her storytelling which, in turn, entices readers into the river wife's spell.

The relative brevity of human life and the ancient, regenerative powers of the Earth form a *leitmotif* in *The River Wife*. Human mortality is sometimes juxtaposed against the eternal existence of the river wife, the river and the planet: "The earth does not care for humans. The wind, the rain, the moon, the birds, the sunshine, the fall of lights and dark, these things are not bound to humans. They are and they go on and that is the only duty they have, to be the cycles of growing and replenishing and falling away" (*RW* 172). The Earth has undergone perennial warming and cooling since it began billions of years ago. This ancient process, now a critical issue for human survival in the twenty-first century, is a contemporary theme in environmental debate. Nevertheless "there is no such thing as 'saving the planet'. Gaia is well beyond our capacity to 'destroy'–although we are making it horribly uncongenial for ourselves, our symbionts and the other organisms we love" (Garrard *Ecocriticism* 205). Through the spirit and tone of prophecy *The River Wife* signals anticipated geographical and ecological changes, which will impact on human populations as the Earth's temperature rises. The river wife tells of the changing seasons and also of the changing climatic patterns:

> As I tended the river through all its cycles, the rhythm of the river shifted. Snow settled upon the mountain but not in the forest. … Again it snowed, and in silence ferns bowed

> their heads to winter. But by the evening the whiteness had seeped into the land … I thought the coming of snow was like the coming of flood and the arrival of spring. It would return. But it did not. Deep cold abandoned the forest. (*RW* 28)

The narrative concludes with the river wife making the sacrifice of her eternal life to save the life of Wilson James. Now mortal, the river wife recognises her imminent death and forfeits her gift of custodianship over the river. Without her care the environment changes from benign and nurturing, and becomes a threat to human and nonhuman flourishing. Her vision for a future shaped by global warming is bleak: "Rain bursts from the sky in wild storms and then does not visit at all. One day the forest will be grassland and the river will be gone. The tallest trees have fallen and the forest is dry in the bare sunlit patches (*RW* 254). Rose does not offer a simplistic resolution for the river wife's dilemma or in terms of the current environmental issues metaphorically embedded in the text. As allegory Wilson James' and the river wife's relationship (remembering that the river wife is also a metaphor for the environment), allows Rose to acknowledge the complexities of adopting ecocentric ethics over the often more immediate gratification of anthropocentric interests.

Conclusion

Through her choice of hybrid genre and aesthetic style Rose positions poetic vision (and, by extension prophetic vision) as a form of knowledge and an ethical guide towards local and global transformation. Despite grim visions for the future of the environment *The River Wife* is more cautionary than dystopian because the fairy tale genre and prophetic narrative allow for change in the actual world. Father's transformation, for example, suggests humans can learn new ways of being in the nonhuman world. Consequently, Rose does not end the story on an entirely bleak note. She leaves a capacity for hope for future generations metaphorically represented through the possible return of the river wife's and Winter King's daughter: "Perhaps my daughter will return and summon the rain to wrap itself about the mountains and

fill the lakes until the land is running with water once more" (*RW* 254). While this is a hopeful scenario for Earth's regeneration it implies, not just the now mortal river wife's death, but the rather sobering thought that human extinction is one of the possible catalysts of restoration for an increasingly vandalised planet.

CHAPTER FIVE:

Environmental Satire as Sword and Shield in Cate Kennedy's *The World Beneath*

"It was nothing like he'd expected; this hive of serious industry" (*WB* 113)

In this chapter I continue discussion of the implications of genre for representations of environmental disaster. Instead of fairy tale and magic realism, examined in the previous chapter, I explore the efficacy of satire to represent serious environmental issues. I consider whether Cate Kennedy's representation of Tasmania's wilderness in her debut novel *The World Beneath* (2009) delivers serious ecological comment, or is effective merely in illuminating the natural world as dramatic setting to enhance characters and story. The plot is compelling and Kennedy admits she is "character-driven" (Interview 5–6). Nevertheless, despite her focus on human drama and a strong comic dimension, I argue that these elements do not undermine environmental concerns. Kennedy achieves her comedic effects primarily through an indirect form of satire which she applies to all her main characters irrespective of their particular environmental perspectives.[31] Such ostensible authorial impartiality potentially extends reader identification and enjoyment beyond that of particular interest groups like radical green activists to mainstream readers, including those without any political interests in the environment at all. Consumerism generally is the main target of Kenney's satire and I analyse this theme through four sub-themes: activism, "green" consumerism, wilderness photography and ecotourism. I conclude that through a skilful combination of humour and environmental

[31] Although Kennedy's satire is often underpinned by a moral purpose (as in Juvenalian satire) her tone is much less derisive and vehement. Kennedy's gentle indirect style is closer to Horatian satire and allows readers to draw their own conclusions from the action of the characters (Cuddon, 387, 440).

comment, Kennedy entertains rather than alienates mainstream readers, in part because she resists an overall tone of green polemics. I argue that her environmental advocacy operates subtly and incrementally to generate a sympathetic response towards fragile wilderness ecosystems.

The World Beneath is a family drama and a gentle social satire and these elements dominate reviews. Subtle and explicit pro-environmental comment, embedded in the narrative, and evocative descriptions of wilderness, have attracted little attention from reviewers. Peter Pierce, writing for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, focuses his review on the dynamics of the broken family and renders the wilderness as backdrop for their relationship ("Delusions Skewered" 26). Likewise, Kerryn Goldsworthy reviewing for *The Australian*, highlights Kennedy's character development and suggests *The World Beneath* is, "In some ways … reminiscent of Christos Tsiolkas's *The Slap*: an unsentimental beady-eyed look at contemporary Australian middle age and its treatment of its children" (3). Writing for *The Age* Susan Wyndham briefly contextualised the Franklin River setting politically but the novel's central location, Cradle Mountain, is only mentioned in connection with Kennedy's Greek mythological underpinning (2).

While popular with mainstream readers and many reviewers, both nationally and internationally, *The World Beneath* has attracted little ecocritical attention.[32] When

[32] For example, *The World Beneath* won the People's Choice Award for the NSW Premier's Literary Awards in 2010. The novel was also shortlisted for several literary fiction awards that year including *The Age* Book of the Year Fiction Award. The rights were sold to North America (Grove/Atlantic) and UK & Commonwealth ex-ANZ and Canada (Atlantic Books) in the same year. See publisher's website: http://scribepublications.com.au/books-authors/title/the-world-beneath/.

commentators do focus on environmental representation it tends to be in a negative sense, as in Patrick Ness' review which describes Kennedy's portrayal of the Tasmanian wilderness as "the freezing, rain-soaked Tasmanian mountains … a bewildering heart of darkness" (1). *Age* literary reviewer Catherine Ford is ultimately disappointed with Kennedy's representation of the wilderness and suggests the author squandered an opportunity to advocate for its ecological fragility. Ford's main objection seems to be the novel's humour and overall light-hearted approach which she believes detracts from the serious issues of environmentalism:

> *The World Beneath* seems characterised by a conflictive traffic of ideas, or perhaps modes of expression, pulled, as it is, between the very serious and the comic, between antipathy and something else, something ambiguous and not quite articulated. … the higher aims tempt us with their seriousness … [but ultimately] hadn't unsettled me or given me pause. … Perhaps none of this would matter if a wilderness hadn't been proffered. (1–3)

It appears ABC Radio National's Peter Mares had similar doubts to Ford's when he offered Kennedy an opportunity to clarify her politics. Mares provocatively suggested: "readers could go away from this book thinking that you're anti-green and anti-feminist" (Interview 5). Kennedy denied this asserting that "the book has quite a solid environmental message at the end when people read through" (Interview 5). Ford's concerns, regarding the significance of environmental destruction and appropriate modes of representation, are similar to those identified by Greg Garrard's discussion of genre (see Chapter Four above). In his analysis of *Solar*, Ian McEwan's long-anticipated novel addressing global warming, Garrard concludes that the "emotion norms" of comic and satirical allegories are limited in their capacity to convey complexities in emotional range ("Lightness of Green" 180). In terms of *The World Beneath*, although the aforementioned Australian reviewers of the novel are noteworthy, a search of AustLit database reveals no critical scholarship on *The World Beneath*, seven years

after publication. Such absence perhaps reinforces the question of whether, because of its humour, the novel is considered too lightweight to merit academic attention.

Michael Branch challenges some of Garrard's points regarding the limits of satire's ability to address environmental issues, and claims that "the ecocritical hesitancy to laugh has caused us to miss some very interesting texts, and to miss opportunities to recognize and enjoy humor in many of the texts we do study" (381). Branch argues for the increased opportunities playfulness and humour bring to environmental writing and gives particular attention to the efficacy of satire as "a tool of battle" (388). Branch also notes that in addition to serving as a "sword" environmental writers may also employ humour as a "shield" against suffering associated with witnessing the destruction of our world (388, 389). Satire, and humour generally, may extend the emotional range common in traditional nature writers away from responses like "reverence, awe, piety and mystical oneness" that can evoke a "kind of moral high ground within ecocritical discourse" (Oates qtd. in Coughan 14). The satirist's vision is often prophetic as simultaneously it warns of the future consequences of destructive behaviour while revealing present and past loss of environmental health. Humour can offer fresh perspectives on time-worn debates for readers and writers, and can also help to protect and heal weary environmental activists from combat fatigue.

Grief and laughter responses parallel the dystopian and utopian dialectic which Rigby, in particular, argues is essential for "writing in the midst of an unfolding disaster" ("Anthropocene" 8). In contrast to Julia Leigh, who writes a bleak narrative about anthropogenic extinction in her novel *The Hunter*, Kennedy, in *The World Beneath*, uses laughter to blunt grief associated with environmental destruction by humans. Garrard's and Branch's positions (above) engage an ongoing debate about the power of comedy and satire to influence audiences and change behaviour. In my reading of *The World Beneath* I follow Branch's approach by demonstrating the political value of humour, both "as sword and shield"

in environmental fiction and ecocriticism (389). After examining Kennedy's satirical representation of various ethical and political positions adopted by characters in the novel I argue that Kennedy's restrained language and governing contemporary ecological aesthetic, when combined with occasional Romantic and Gothic tropes, bring clarity and depth to her themes.

The narrative of *The World Beneath* is structured around two main settings and timeframes—the Overland Track (subsequently referred to as The Track)—a long iconic bush walking trail in the Central Highlands of Tasmania which runs from Cradle Mountain to Lake St. Clair, and the Franklin River Blockade (FRB) of 1983 in South West Tasmania. Kennedy structures contemporary wilderness discourse around three main characters (Sandy, Rich and Sophie) but has declared in interview that none of them express her own personal ethical position (Interview 5). A series of flashbacks relate events of 1983 when activist parents Sandy and Rich (now estranged) participated in the protest movement to prevent the damming of the Franklin River. The novel's narrative present is 2008 and fifteen-year-old Sophie (a product of Sandy's and Rich's brief union), reconnects with her father as they walk The Track together. The plot is exciting as Sophie and her father become lost in the wilderness. Precocious Sophie cynically rejects her mother's "Romantic soft-environmentalism" (Interview 3). A photographer, Rich's self-interested, career-enhancing focus has little regard for the intrinsic value of the area and is given counterpoint by his daughter's emerging ecological awareness. Kennedy's engaging narrative is underpinned by several themes which intersect with contemporary environmental ethics and I analyse four of these separately below.

Activism—Myths and Heroes

An "early warning system for the natural economy … the living world's immunological response" is how Edward O. Wilson defines environmental protestors (*Future of Life* 188). Long-established protest groups like The Sierra Club, Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth,

EarthFirst! and World Wildlife Fund are just a handful of international organisations dedicated to protecting the planet's ecology. Yet, Wilson's description of activists as environmental antibodies, or heroes, is often not shared by mainstream communities, particularly if there is an economic co-dependence operating. The typical employees of the HEC and Forestry Tasmania, for example, describe green activists as "fucken ferals" and "stinking fucking greenie[s]" (Krien 13 and 83). In *Into the Woods* (2010) investigative journalist Anna Krien reminds readers that "activists tread a fine line between drawing attention to threatened areas and provoking resentment that can ultimately backfire" (32). This tension also applies to literary activists whose target audience is mainstream readers. Humour and subtle satirising of all political persuasions underpins Kennedy's compelling plot and engaging characters, in a novel primarily designed for entertainment. Nevertheless, I argue, *The World Beneath* delivers strong and memorable environmental comment and thus itself embodies a kind of activism.

Kennedy's portrayal of Rich and Sandy's moment at the FRB in *The World Beneath* reveals much of the nostalgia, misplaced heroism and inaccurate myths sometimes associated with environmental campaigners.[33] Simultaneously it creates a more balanced contemporary mythology that includes peripheral narratives (as Iovino recommends), as it gestures to readers

[33] I use the terms "myth" and "mythology" in this chapter in two ways: primarily, as a continuation of Cassirer's and Iovino's literary sense that contemporary mythology (created, I argue, by narratives like Kennedy's *The World Beneath*) refers to underlying cultural truths, and the belief that these stories have at least a kernel of universal wisdom. Sandy's and Rich's "myths," however, refer to the popular interpretation of the word, that is, their memories and stories do not accord with historical knowledge or resonate with current understandings as set out by Sophie in the narrative, and reinforced in my analysis, by Alice Hungerford's oral history.

of the physical hardships and personal sacrifices of the hard-core activists who lived for months at a time in the primitive rainforest conditions. Both of these perspectives, which reveal the transient and the committed activists, provoke serious reflection on environmentalists. Rich and Sandy (both residents of mainland Victoria) represent one group of protestors whose high-profile, but brief, contribution is evaluated through Sophie's cynical but perceptive point-of-view. This three-way interaction is an insightful representation of the many facets of activism.

Kennedy introduces Sandy's activism into the narrative from Sophie's point of view. The teenager barely listens anymore to her mother's "rants about back when she saved the world" (*WB* 11). As Sandy relives the communal life of training workshops for non-violent resistance and the numerous planning meetings at *Greenie Acres* that led up to the campaign events, Sophie remembers how: "Other kids had *The Three Bears* every night of their childhoods; [while] she had the Franklin River Blockade" (*WB* 12). Sophie's longing for classic fairy tales in her childhood suggests she feels a level of deprivation from her mother's obsession with the FRB. It can also be inferred that Sandy, an idealist, is telling a fairy tale (or "myth" in the popular sense of the word) which has the effect of undermining both her credibility and her version of the campaign itself. This is in accord with Sophie's adolescent cynicism about the future, although this is later revealed to be a more superficial aspect of her personality. From the outset, however, Sophie's reactions to her mother's stories introduces a note of scepticism about the now legendary campaign and its participants.

Twenty-five years after the FRB, in the narrative present, Sandy is a market artisan making jewellery, and a member of The Consumer Action Group. She endeavours to make ethical consumer choices but fails to impress her daughter in any way. While Sandy believes she is fighting for social justice, Sophie trivialises her earnest (if at times misguided) effort: "It's just funny that you've gone from attacking global capitalism to boycotting muesli bars" (*WB* 22). Kennedy's satire, of aspects of Sandy's character, reveals and warns how noble ideals

can become entangled in, and diminished by, the very consumerist culture they seek to avoid. While Sophie walks "The Track," Sandy distracts herself with a New Age Goddess Workshop. She hopes awakening her "Divine Feminine" will deprogram her anxiety about Sophie's reconnection with her father (*WB* 116). During meditation sessions Sandy day-dreams about the Blockade: "it was a perfect small world they created at *Greenie Acres*. A microcosm of the way society could be" (*WB* 121). She was finally arrested and locked up for the night in Risdon Prison but ironically the conditions of incarceration were an improvement on the camp at Strahan. In prison she was welcomed with a cup of tea, had shower access, a change of clothes, a clean comfortable bed and no problem ordering a vegetarian meal (*WB* 116). But the excitement of the arrest, and the general camaraderie fed her idealism—Sandy was "drugged" by her first "hit" of activism.

Sandy's Romanticised version of the FRB is partially emulated by Rich, but his focus is heroic action rather than communal spirit. He arrived from Melbourne with the intention of being arrested as soon as possible and was impatient with the preparation and practice sessions. On "The Track" he tells Sophie of his euphoria from being part of the prestigious protest. He passionately describes the arrival of the first bulldozer on a barge, and the dramatic scene as it ploughed straight through the flotilla of protestors in rubber dinghies. In reality he only experienced this vicariously, from photos, because he was waiting at Warner's Landing where the bulldozer began to destroy the forest. At the time, emotionally, he didn't feel any sense of victory: "Nothing. Numb. … He couldn't tell her that" (*WB* 111). When she asked him how long he was there he lied: "He'd spent two days there. Thirty-eight hours. He shrugged casually. 'Oh you know, a week or so.'" (*WB* 110). Kennedy suggests that Sophie doubts this account when Rich observed "Her eyes slid away from him ... back out the window, veiled with private thoughts" (*WB* 112). Her withdrawal triggers his own disillusioned memories: the robotic arrest scenarios—"[an]other role-play"—and the rehearsed court statements which led him

ultimately, to lose faith in the democratic process (*WB* 189). In desperation Rich attempts to rescue the moment, and his heroic status, by referring to Strahan's now thriving tourist industry: "I wonder what they'd have to say, meeting one of the Greenies who saved their cash cow for them" (*WB* 112).

Rich's comment here is a foreshadowing of Kennedy's exposition of his self-interested promotion of ecotourism in the narrative present. From the beginning Kennedy constructs Rich as a self-absorbed drifter who deserted his partner and baby daughter when the pressure of parenting demanded too much from him. He had a series of night jobs in order to leave his days free to pursue his photography ambitions and a series of casual relationships that required no commitment. Although these are not necessarily undesirable choices in themselves, Kennedy combines Rich's lifestyle with his insecure but arrogant personality. He is often condescending towards fellow workers and his approach to women is chauvinistic and sure to provoke distaste in many readers of both genders (*WB* 18, 72). His advice to a morning-show host whose cosmetic surgery left him as "as blank and chiselled as the cyborg in *Terminator*" reveals Rich's own superficial relationships with women: "You didn't even have to try too hard. … they were hardwired for it, desperate to spawn whatever the odds. They couldn't help themselves" (*WB* 19). Rich's level of self-delusion extends to perceptions of his own sexual attractiveness, his artistic talent and to the importance of his role in the FRB.

Towards the end of the narrative it is Sophie's "voice" which provides a "reality check" (from her high school project on the Franklin River Campaign) for Rich's contribution to the FRB and to the existence of the huge team of long-term support workers who were "invisible" during the campaign. She says: "'You didn't stop one bulldozer …The election's what stopped the dam. You guys were really just a nuisance that held the HEC up for a while, weren't you?'" (*WB* 256). Rich, shocked by her aggression insists he "went to jail protesting to save that river'" provoking Sophie to go "in for the kill" (*WB* 256). She vents her fury by denigrating Rich's

"moment" in the limelight and setting it against the work of activists who were the "unsung heroes":

> You just showed up, when it comes down to it. Someone had to organise everything and have the idea for it, someone had to plan it all out, but it wasn't you. You showed up, someone drove you there, someone told you where to camp, someone fed you. And then someone boated you up the river and then someone else arrested you. Chauffeured all the way, really. What's so heroic about that? Why don't you get over yourself? (*WB* 256).

This passage is central to the novel's representation of activism. Kennedy is remarkably accurate in her portrayal of the huge network behind the high-profile protestors and thus *The World Beneath* makes a significant contribution to the collective mythology of the FRB. Alice Hungerford spent four years researching the people and events which shaped the FRB and she also has her own story to tell as a participant. Her 2013 publication *UpRiver*: *Untold Stories of the Franklin River Activists* is a collection of oral histories preserved for future generations. Hungerford reveals the contrived nature of media exploits, the huge administrative effort of the Tasmanian Wilderness Society (TWS) and the relative courage of normally law-abiding citizens who were prepared to live with a criminal record to prevent the Franklin Dam. She also devotes a substantial part of her book to describing the myriad of other roles activists occupied which were crucial to the success of the campaign.

Kennedy makes it clear that neither Rich nor Sandy experienced harsh conditions (as in Hungerford's account, for example) either during their few days of protest or their night in Risdon Jail and this revelation provides a different perspective from the stories they tell. Ironically, it is Sophie, through her knowledge gained from her school project, who presents a more accurate account of the FRB than her parents who were there at the time (*WB* 256). Rich and Sandy, like Wilson James in *The River Wife*, are portrayed as necessarily imperfect humans.

Even when adopting the role of protectors their essentially contemporary, consumerist lifestyle involves an environmental threat. Kennedy, like Rose, reveals the difficulties of living a sustainable existence in the twenty-first century, but more significantly both authors highlight the degrees of difference between activists/conservationists who are really committed and those who are primarily "buying and selling" a heroic self-image.

Kennedy's novel is focussed on character development and plot and does not (nor should be expected to) provide the level of detail available in Hungerford's oral history account. Nevertheless, when I use Hungerford's historical account as a benchmark, the extent of Kennedy's research is obvious, and is encapsulated through the distilled conversation between father and daughter which I analysed above. Throughout *The World Beneath* Sophie's questions and background knowledge demystify Rich and Sandy's nostalgic recollections, revealing them as idealistic, and at times pretentious and self-serving. This exposure creates opportunities for reader reflection, an unsettlement or "reason for pause" which escaped Ford (quoted in beginning of this chapter) and also the potential to engage further interest in discovering the historical version of the FRB. Kennedy succeeds in demystifying some of the ideology of the FRB and she also creates a new, more balanced narrative which, I argue, forms the contemporary new mythology conceptualised by Iovino. *The World Beneath* separates some of the would-be heroes from the unsung heroes through a variety of stories about a local environmental protest. Not only does Kennedy's novel make a significant addition to Tasmanian's collective mythology, but her satire on activism and heroism provides general resonance for universal experiences and wisdom.

"Green" Consumerism—Disposability and Desire

Despite writing a "green novel" Kennedy does not recoil from satirising consumerism within the environmental movement. "Nothing is meant to last for too long in an era of rapid commodity turn-over, and the ostensible value-adding offered by 'new and improved' …

[products] feeds this consumption treadmill" (R. White *Environmental Harm* 162). Marketing psychology coupled with increasing problems of waste disposal constitute global environmental hazards. Cleverly pitched, glossy advertisements coerce shoppers into continually acquiring and/or replacing products of a material and experiential nature. Kennedy highlights marketing pressures through Rich's visit to a camping megastore to equip himself for "The Track." One of the ironies in Rich's character is that while he regards himself as an environmentalist Kennedy exposes his superficial and hypocritical attitudes. Twenty-five years ago he wanted to be a hero at the FRB, now he wants to be a hero for his daughter. The environment is not his first priority on either occasion, but rather a means for his own self-fulfilment.

Rich cynically browses the latest range of outdoor clothing as the sales consultant explains the benefits of thermal layering in polypropolene and wicked fabrics. Through some cleverly written repartee Kennedy juxtaposes the generational differences between the two men examining the goods. In an effort to impress the younger man Rich (who hasn't been bushwalking for years) begins to relate his time at the FRB. He describes the uncomplicated and frugal (often army surplus) clothing Tasmanian bushwalkers in the seventies and eighties favoured: "we just took flannelette shirts, woollen jumpers and a japara. And jeans. … There wasn't even polar fleece" (*WB* 25-25). The robotic salesman, however, appears oblivious to his customer's attempts to engage him in genuine conversation. Furthermore, he has no notion of the simple, rough clothing Rich describes as being symbolic of hardship and heroism, but merely regards it as inferior.

An obvious product of best practice retail training the salesman skilfully interprets each of Rich's comments in terms of a potential sale: "They must train them, Rich thought sourly, in the art of deflection. Or else they make them in a lab out the back, and just hang them up in the cupboard at night with the recharger on" (*WB* 25). Eventually, anxious to impress his

teenage daughter with his fashion sense, Rich is seduced into spending almost two thousand dollars on clothing and equipment:

> He made his way to the checkout with a pile of wicking microbe-killing clothing, a sleeping bag called an Odyssey Pathfinder that looked eerily like an Egyptian sarcophagus, a backpacker butane stove, a high performance geodesic tent and a honeycomb self-inflating mat … it felt good, anyway, buying a stack of brand-new clothing from this high-end chain, in the latest colours and styles. (*WB* 30-31)

In a final satirical blow Kennedy deflates Rich's hard-won customer satisfaction with a reminder of the psychology of disposability and "latest versions" which governs marketing strategies and subsequent consumer behaviour. At the checkout Rich receives a ten per cent discount because "new season's stock is coming in next Tuesday" (*WB* 31).

Through this comic sketch at the camping store Kennedy demonstrates the nature of consumerism and its level of infiltration into Australian (and Western) society. By contrasting Rich's clothing of 1983 with what is available twenty-five years later she indicates the acceleration and intensification of twenty-first-century consumerism generally. More significantly for ecocriticism she reveals the layers of incongruity and hypocrisy that can exist even beneath the surface of earnest environmentalism. Despite gestures towards sustainability like minimal packaging and durable fabrics, the treadmill of self-perpetuating consumption is apparent.

Rich struggles with his purchase decisions at the camping store, weighing up his budget and trading off its limitations against winning the admiration of his estranged daughter. Far from being judgmental, and within the satire and cynicism of consumerism, Kennedy is sympathetic to Rich's shopping dilemmas which reflect similar "two for the price of one" and similar retail strategies most readers are likely to encounter in their local supermarkets. The common consumer experience, of marketing tactics which target human insecurities, is the real

subject of Kennedy's satire. A shared experience of global marketing pressure (regardless of product), when aimed at human ego-identity and anxieties, potentially erodes barriers of class and politics, and demonstrates Branch's point that humour fosters the sympathetic imagination or "fellow feeling." For *The World Beneath* the result is twofold—Kennedy's representation of Rich's shopping experience allows for wider reader identification and also achieves the result of "humanising greenies" whose often perceived stereotype of ethical snobbishness may alienate mainstream readers. Ultimately, in this scenario (and in the novel generally) it is not Rich (or pseudo or committed environmentalists) but consumerist culture itself which is the main target of Kennedy's satire.

Wilderness Photography—a Matter for Ethics or Aesthetics?

Aesthetic representations of wilderness, especially in the context of unfolding environmental disasters, incur ethical consequences. Ecocritics, but also writers of fiction, can highlight tensions and moments of synthesis within styles of representation which suggest eco-regressive or eco-progressive outcomes. Kennedy's depiction of an overcrowded and ecologically eroded Overland Track provides an opportunity for her to satirise traditional approaches to wilderness photography that ignore or conceal contemporary ecological conditions.

Rather than engage with *actual* environmental conditions, Rich prefers to *compose* an image of pristine and empty wilderness. Rich intentionally reproduces objects of "the tourist gaze" which, as John Urry explains, create "anticipation [that] is constructed and sustained through a variety of non-tourist practices, such as film, TV, literature, magazines, [calendars] records and videos" (3). Such correspondences are discussed in Chapter Three, as the tourist rafting down the Franklin River, in Richard Flanagan's *Death of a River Guide*, seek reassuring images of the picturesque to comply with wilderness calendars in their homes and offices. Aljaz, the river guide, understands their insecurity and their need to confirm preconceived ideas of wilderness: "they only saw what they knew and they knew none of it, and recognised little"

(Flanagan, *River Guide* 80). In contrast to Isla MacDonald's eco-progressive "Smelterscape" (the cover photograph of this thesis), for example, Rich seeks to "showcase" the wilderness by reproducing the Romantic sublime that preoccupied artists and writers of the nineteenth century and which is often perpetuated in contemporary wilderness photography. Although some remote regions of Tasmania still accord with historical images of pristine wilderness, in *The World Beneath*, Kennedy fractures this conventional aesthetic through her contemporary ecological depiction that reveals Cradle Mountain's Overland Track is no longer one of them.

The history of Tasmanian wilderness photography is inextricably linked with the history of environmental activism and bushwalking, and more recently, with ecotourism and consumerism generally. This is evident in the 2013 photographic exhibition *Into the Wild* which documented the development of wilderness photography in Tasmania. In this exhibition Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery's Damien Quilliam, Curator of Contemporary Australian Art, and Jon Addison, curator of History, combined an appreciation of history and wilderness photography aesthetics. Work exhibited included pioneer photographers Morton Allport (1830-78), John Watt Beattie (1859-1930), pioneer female bushwalker Florence Perrin (1884-1952) and Frederick Smithies (1885-1979). Also included was globally recognised local photographer Olegas Truchanas (1923-72) who died in an attempt to photograph the Gordon below Franklin River environment. "His dream was of a Tasmania where man and nature were one, 'a shining beacon in a dull, uniform, largely artificial world'" (Crowley 40). Fellow photographer and environmental activist Peter Dombrovskis (1945-96) also died while photographing in the South West region. "Dombrovskis was an environmentalist … and his photographs were instrumental in the conservation of Tasmanian wild places" (Haygarth 98).

'Rock Island Bend,' Dombrovskis' 1980 photo of the Franklin River (see below) became an icon for the campaign for its protection. Today the Franklin River remains one of the few wild rivers in the world which is not dammed or seriously polluted (Smith and Banks

114). Dynamics between photography, painting and literature continue to conjoin and/or conflict in contemporary wilderness representations. Most significantly, aesthetic representations, both past and contemporary, continue to illuminate, disguise or deny actual environmental conditions.

Figure 3 Rock Island Bend (Franklin River) by Peter Dombrovskis (courtesy of Liz Dombrovskis)

Individual photographers' motivations and styles vary but curators Addison and Quilliam explain that there are several features which distinguish the wilderness photography genre from general landscape photography:

> Most photography in this genre [wilderness] uses the conceit that the photographs represent nature in a pristine form. Humans may play a role in these images, but it is never a dominating one. The presence of humans or human artefacts serves to heighten

> their insignificance in the face of nature rather than to imply dominance. Wilderness photographers invariably love nature and the natural world, and share a desire to communicate this to others. This often results in … a political or ideological dimension. (Haygarth 10)

Haygarth explains how many wilderness photographers manipulate a scene into "apparent naturalness" (12). The resulting vicarious spectator experience, which appears on the media or in an environmental calendar perhaps, "is the careful product of years of preparation in the form of photographic study, testing the market and assembling equipment" (Haygarth 12). Although somewhat Romanticised, Dombrovskis' "Rock Island Bend" is a relatively natural depiction of an actual place. By relatively I refer to a significantly lower level of construction than the type of photographs Rich takes on The Overland Track. First, there is a timeframe difference of over thirty years. Secondly, tourism (both in the early 1980s and in 2009) has had a much greater impact on the Cradle Mountain area than it has on Rock Island Bend, the latter remaining much more difficult to access so it still receives relatively few visitors.

Kennedy's portrayal of Rich's photography in *The World Beneath* reveals the degree of construction and artifice referred to in the aforementioned comments. For example, instead of representing the reality of a long procession of bushwalkers on the duckboard which protects large sections of The Track, Rich manipulates the scenes in accord with the classic, often clichéd, aesthetic of a pristine environment with little or no human disturbance. Yet, Rich always believes himself to be capable of an original and superior shot which will raise his own professional profile. He remains convinced that his photographic talent can capture (conquer) and preserve the panoramic scale of the mountain peaks and vast alpine moorland. In contrast, as they approached the pinnacle of Marion's Lookout, Sophie recognises immediately that the vast expanse of peaks and lakes would not "translate' successfully on her mobile phone screen (*WB* 119). "She looked up at the track ahead, and the brightly clad walkers strung out along it,

all of them made tiny by the hugeness of the landscape around them. … No point holding up your phone to get a picture, the place overwhelmed that tiny screen. You couldn't capture even a fragment of its detail" (*WB* 125).

It is primarily through Rich's conversations with Sophie and their contrasting points-of-view that Kennedy juxtaposes the artificial construction of photographs depicting "pristine" wilderness devoid of humans with the actual landscape they are experiencing. During their descent into Waterfall Valley Rich attempts to teach Sophie about photography and points out "a classic panorama shot" which reminds the astute teenager of some of the photos Rich had been criticising in the gallery earlier (*WB* 130). He was contemptuous of the computer-enhanced work in the Visitor Centre gallery: "this is meant to be the showcase of Australian contemporary photographic artists—but see that? They've Photoshopped that" (*WB* 124). Thus, it is not without irony, that Rich attaches a wide-angle lens in order to manipulate the scene, as in a conventional wilderness conceit: "'See, this lens will accentuate the sense of space, it'll stretch the horizontals and make you look really small in the landscape'" (*WB* 130). It never occurs to Rich that his technical skills may not actually enhance the already magnificent vista nor does he seem to recognise the aesthetic correspondences of manipulation between wide-angle lenses and computer editing programs like Photoshop. Reminiscent of a gambling addict waiting for the next big win, Rich remains driven to find "the" photo which will lift him from mediocrity to international fame.

While Rich generally approaches his photography in accord with the classic wilderness genre Kennedy demonstrates that he is not without creative imagination as she describes a section of the landscape through his point-of-view: "Miles of stiff yellow buttongrass, tufty and strawberry blonde, like a glam-rocker's hairdo. Duran Duran grass. And the pandani, those

big clusters of grass trees like something Dr Seuss would draw" (*WB* 156).[34] Imaginatively linking images of rock bands and cartoon characters with endangered wilderness introduces popular icons and humour into the narrative and subtly, subliminally perhaps, links the images of the vegetation with a sense of fun or amusement. It is this "light touch" in Kennedy's novel which avoids grim environmentalist discourse and in doing so, potentially expands characters' appeal for mainstream readers. She also "shows" rather than "tells" that Rich's character may have more complexity than has been revealed in the narrative so far.

One of the ways Kennedy engages with the ethical ambiguities of "showcasing" wilderness and ecotourism generally is by depicting the large volume of tourists on the Overland Track. As Rich waits for his turn in a prime viewing spot his thoughts encapsulate the tensions inherent in "showcasing" wilderness: "what was the point of a wilderness photo if it looked like a bus stop?" (*WB* 199). To his annoyance "amateur" photographers queued politely at all the picturesque locations: "They all wanted exactly the same thing … the illusion of emptiness, the myth that they were there alone. [instead] it was all trampled by ten thousand pairs of boots, uploaded onto hundreds of travel blogs, stored in phones, restlessly sifted over a million times (*WB* 199).

Perpetuating the "wilderness ideal" in representations of popular areas like "The Track," through photography, literature and other mediums, often comes at the expense of raising awareness of human impact on the increasingly vulnerable ecology. Kennedy's narrative, on

[34] Interestingly this image created by Kennedy recalls a photo taken in 1988 by Dombrovskis – 'Lake Oberon, Western Arthur Range, south-west Tasmania' in which 3 pandani, framed like human spectators with bizarre "hairstyles" overlook the lake. (See Appendix Two for image). It is not clear though if Kennedy is consciously or unconsciously drawing from this image to suggest Rich's originality or to further suggest his ideas are derivative.

the other hand, reveals the *actual* environmental conditions as she simultaneously satirises those who manipulate images for their own ends. Rather than focussing on industrial pollution and waste (as Richard Flanagan and Cameron Hindrum do) Kennedy evokes a "toxic sublime" by revealing a wilderness in the process of "contamination" by ecotourists. Kennedy, however, generally avoids "Romanticising" the wilderness because, unlike Rich, she is not concerned with aesthetic elements of human presence in the landscape, but rather the resulting ecological impact. Instead of depicting a particular ethical approach as a panacea for environmental degradation though, Kennedy's portrayal of wilderness photography captures the ambiguity, complexity and irony within the concept of ecotourism.

Ecotourism—"Off the Beaten Track" and Onto the "Overland Superhighway"

The theme of wilderness photography complements Kennedy's overall depiction of the ethical complexities associated with ecotourism. Marketing and planning proposals designed to attract many ecological "footprints" (the measure of the impact humans have on the environment) can divide environmentalists in much the same way as heavy industrial developments may engender conflict in the general community. For example, "showcasing" Tasmania's wilderness has been promoted by the State's Governments and independent entrepreneurs as a significant means of local employment for the economically embattled State. Yet, the National Parks huts and tent platforms can be overcrowded in peak times and walkers "overflow" into the surrounding vegetation, destroying plant life and wildlife habitat. Commercial tourism has already commenced in the area Kennedy has set her narrative; "Cradle Mt Huts Walk" company provide private huts, hot showers, 3 course dinners and selected Tasmanian wines as part of a package deal currently priced at $3,400 per person (twin share) for the six day guided walk.[35] The Green Party and The Tasmanian Wilderness Society (TWS) are concerned about

[35] See www.cradlehuts.com.au

facilitating more access by the construction of more roads and accommodation. Presumably this will further increase the volume of tourists who already "invade" the fragile wilderness every summer to walk The Overland Track.[36]

Not unique to Tasmania, environmental degradation from ecotourism is a global issue. The Lake District in England, for example, is overrun by tourists in the summer months. Considerable plant and animal life from Lake Tahoe, in the United States of America, and Barbados, in the Caribbean, has been destroyed through the "pumping of raw sewage into the seas from beachside hotels" (Urry 39). Kennedy's narrative demonstrates how the "tourist gaze" and subsequent "ecological footprint" constitutes a major threat to the nonhuman world, ironically through a growing appreciation of that world's spectacular vulnerability.

Ostensibly ecotourism presents as a promising compromise between the divisive positions of conservationists and commercial developers, but ongoing proposals involving encroachment into Tasmanian national parks and World Heritage areas spark new environmental battles. In *The World Beneath* Kennedy captures the tension between these two groups in a number of ways: through satirising the ideal of going "off the beaten track" onto the "Overland Superhighway"; through a diverse group of bushwalkers on The Track; and through responses to what Rich believes is a photo of a thylacine. These examples of ethical

[36] Since 1971 the number of walkers to complete the entire Overland Track has increased dramatically from 1,407 to 8,267 in 2009 (and reduced slightly to 7,396 in 2013). Note – these figures do not include the volume of people who only walk part of The Track. Source PDF file "Number of persons on the Overland Track," *Visitor Research and Statistics.* Parks and Wildlife Services Tasmania. http://www.parks.tas.gov.au/index.aspx?base=866 . Accessed 8th January, 2015

complexities of wilderness ecotourism are distilled through the divergent environmental discourses of Rich, Sophie and Libby and Russell.

Anastasia G. Stamou and Stephanos Paraskevopoulos point out the "nebulous" nature of the concept of ecotourism and settle on a couple of basic elements that contribute towards a working understanding:

> ecotourism tries to reconcile the two traditionally 'competitive' forces of environmentalism (eco-: conservation and environmental learning) and economy (-tourism: economic benefits and recreation). … [but] it has frequently been claimed that the economic aspect of ecotourism has overridden the environmentalist one by being usually implemented as a consumerist activity with a green wrapping … [and] there are conflicting results about whether ecotourists have and/or acquire environmental awareness in addition to enjoying themselves. (105–06)

I tease out these two "competing" (and at times complementary) forces of tourist and environmental discourse through my textual analysis. Tourism discourse tends to emphasis the pursuit of physical or aesthetic pleasure through forms of recreational consumption which have economic benefits for local communities. On the other hand, environmental discourse emphasises respectful relationships between humans and nonhumans during the pursuit of relatively low impact activities like bushwalking and photography. Concern about the dangers of human impact on fragile ecosystems is central to environmental discourse but sometimes leads to eco-regressive wilderness rhetoric which separates humans from wilderness. Ecotourism attempts to combine these two discourses, but this can be problematic. Perhaps the most obvious difference is that tourism discourse is anthropocentric in focus while the environmental discourse (traditionally linked to conservationism) can represent either anthropocentric or ecocentric values. The pleasure element, present in both tourism and environmental discourses, allows for complementary overlap through the pursuit of aesthetic

and material fulfilment. Ecotourists can enjoy the natural beauty of wilderness scenery while challenging themselves physically and potentially improving their health and well-being.

From the outset Kennedy represents the dangers of ecotourism and human impact on The Track. First, she depicts the volume of tourists in peak season through Rich's initial observations of The Cradle Mountain Visitor Centre: "a hive of serious industry," walkers queue for the shuttle bus, "the car park is full of cars and coaches and tour-group minibuses" (*WB* 114-115). The prevalence of international tourists is also conveyed: the bus is a "babel of German and Dutch and English in accents" as it transports them to Ronny Creek, the start of The Track (*WB* 114). Rich is shocked to see "not a worn-earth track … but no-nonsense duckboards augmented with a strip of non-slip mesh … And people everywhere … a giant processed conveyor belt of humanity" (*WB* 114). "'Well,' he said dryly to Sophie. 'Here we are, in the great uncharted wilderness'" (*WB* 114).

After establishing the volume of tourists, Kennedy proceeds to intersperse the narrative with portrayals of erosion on The Track as a consequence of the walkers. Initially, through a conversation between ecologically aware walkers, she raises numerous issues, including the need for "wet-boot walking" (walkers not avoiding boggy spots and thus going off-track and damaging wider areas), the constant need for volunteers to help with repair work and the possibility (now a reality) of capping the number of tourists accessing The Track each summer: "Too many walkers, just loving the place to death" (*WB* 168).[37] Untroubled by the increasing human impact on the vulnerable ecosystems, Rich is just resentful of restrictions which add to his discomfort. He regards the whole robotic treadmill experience as a waste of money. He

[37] At the present time (2016) the booking system is designed to manage up to sixty departures per day in the peak season between 1st October and 31st May.

complains to Sophie that it has become like a museum: "'Can't touch this, can't do that. No lighting fires, no stepping off the track. … fined if you build a cairn'" (*WB* 211).

Kennedy also demonstrates how the volume of people walking The Track has led to changes in wildlife behaviour. Reminiscent of foxes' evolution in cities and suburbs, local currawongs (large raven-like birds prevalent in the mountains) learned to exploit the bushwalker "invasion." The currawongs have adapted so successfully that they cooperatively forage through backpacks for human food: "How many packs had it taken them, how many thousands of humans dumping their belongings here day after day, for the penny to drop? (*WB* 201). Through Kennedy's portrayal of the resourceful currawongs and her representation of the conditions of The Track she captures part of the reality of ecotourism in the popular wilderness region of Cradle Mountain. Much of Tasmania's wilderness however, is still bordering on pristine and walkers could walk in relatively inaccessible areas for days (especially in the seasons other than summer) without encountering other humans. Currently it is the "showcased" and more accessible areas like The Overland Track which are at risk of losing some of the very qualities which ecotourists seek. As government and independent entrepreneurs continue developing in national parks and World Heritage areas (as previously discussed), Kennedy's satirical "Overland Superhighway" serves as a prophetic warning for the future of Tasmanian wilderness (*WB* 229).

Harper writes extensively on the types of walking and hiking which evolved during the first half of the twentieth century. She explains the philosophical differences between "amateur" hikers (who choose day walks usually on well-constructed paths) and the more dedicated "elite," long-distance bushwalkers who venture into remote places (*WB* 237–38). Kennedy's characters Libby and Russell, "know-it-all" but kindly experts, embody many of the traits of the typical 1930s bushwalkers, specifically the level of deprivation they endure in order to achieve the admired skills of self-sufficiency and survival. Kennedy shows, through their actions and the

responses of other characters, where Libby and Russell "fit" on the spectrum of ecotourists. Actual dialogue relating specifically to raising ecologic awareness is absent from their conversations. This absence avoids what others of differing political persuasions might regard as a sanctimonious "green" tone. Russell, however, is a bird-watcher and the couple refer to specific aesthetic experiences like the beauty of the fagus (deciduous beech) and they also practice low-impact bushwalking.

Kennedy satirises Russell's stereotype through Rich's point-of-view and this creates some of the best humour in the novel. Rich proves an effective contrast for the satire through his careless attitude to the unpredictable climate, his arrogant decision not to purchase a map, and his general lack of preparation for adversity. Libby takes Sophie under her maternal wing, feeding her fruit cake and lending her suitable warm clothing. Russell, depicted with child-like enthusiasm, is impressively resourceful and is always ready to assist Rich with equipment and advice. Rich describes him sarcastically as "a juggernaut of handy hints" who "Knew everything. Been everywhere. Like a bloody scout master" (*WB* 137 and 138):

> Wondering how many days of rain the park got a year? Russell was your man. …Unsure whether you needed to boil the water out of the hut tank? Here, have a few of these water purifying tablets, so you don't need to waste your stove fuel. Mildly interested in knowing what bird it was you'd seen that afternoon? Why, let's take a look in Russell's handy pocket field guide. (*WB* 137)

Rich perceives every one of his own failings as a victory for Russell. Soon, decked out in Russell's headlamp, Russell's *spare* gaiters, his blister coated with Russell's Golden Seal ointment Rich is being nourished by Russell's wife's fruit cake. As Rich's strength and confidence deteriorate, his blister ulcerates. He watches resentfully as Russell springs through the muddy patches in a pair of old sneakers "on calf muscles that seemed hydraulically powered" (*WB* 169).

Simultaneously readers laugh at Russel and Libby's catalogue of equipment and seemingly infinite knowledge about bushwalking but also absorb what could prove useful lessons on bush safety. Caricatures they may become, through Rich's contemptuous point-of-view, but ultimately, Libby and Russell are everyday heroes. It is their observation of the walkers' late return and subsequent recognition of possible danger, coupled with one of Russell's handy hints (the dried orange peel to start fires), which significantly increase the chances of rescue when Rich and Sophie become lost. Kennedy not only raises awareness of the fragile Cradle Mountain ecology through her depiction of track erosion but, through the characters of Libby and Russell, she also conveys some of the hazards awaiting the inexperienced and under-prepared who venture there, for example, lack of reliable mobile phone reception through Sophie's unsuccessful attempts which culminate in a flat battery. In terms of Kennedy's own political position in the novel, it is significant that Libby and Russell are primarily satirised from Rich's point-of-view rather than from the author's. Rich is not a character whose opinion most readers would respect, consider reliable or want to identify with. Consequently, readers are more likely to distance themselves from Rich's attitudes which, in turn allows Libby's and Russell's responsible environmentalist approach to be taken more seriously.

Kennedy's satire is strategic as she exploits Sandy's Sophie's and Rich's points-of-view to subtly convey underlying green sympathies. Libby and Russell represent common sense, Sophie (despite her struggle with anorexia) represents reasoned thought, while Sandy and Rich epitomise self-gratification. Throughout the novel Rich advances an argument for ecotourism which is counteracted by Sophie's cynicism about the greed and mismanagement of the tourist industry. While career ambitions and general self-interest rather than ecological concerns dominate Rich's attitudes and decisions, his character is complex, as moments of past

genuine ecological concern surface. For example, before the pair leaves Hobart Rich witnesses a fully laden log truck haul its cargo through one of the city streets:

> Carving its way through the city … its chained-on cargo of huge felled trees, some trunks still covered in shreds of moss and bark.
>
> A pocket of cool air seemed to hit Rich as the logs flashed past his eyes, the momentary smell of damp, silent forest. There was a whole world of memories, he knew, still embedded intact in some fold of his brain. … still breathing out woody moisture, the exposed concentric age-rings jolting away like an ebbing, barely noticed reproach. (*WB* 100)

Rich's nostalgic musings evoking the fading dynamism of ancient forest, suggests he was an environmental idealist in his youth. (This is reinforced when, later in the narrative, Sophie is lamenting human destruction and pleading for wild places to be locked up: Rich says "Mmm, I used to think like that …" (*WB* 311).) Through sensory description of "shreds of moss" and "woody moisture" Kennedy suggests the remnants of a living forest (*WB* 100). In addition, the "smell of damp silent forest" and the "breath" of woody moisture add a Proustian moment of nostalgia for Rich while the "exposed concentric age-rings" evoke an ancient kinship between humans and the forest (*WB* 100). As the log truck passes by this image of residual life-force ebbs into one of protracted "death" of the trees as they are hauled in chains to their final "execution." In turn the "barely noticed reproach" from the logs links human characteristics with nonhuman species (*WB* 100). This effectively heightens the anthropomorphised trees' sense of "betrayal" by human exploitation. Nevertheless, Rich's memories of how he "used to think" do not seem to regenerate his ideals for the present but remain merely as memories underpinning disillusionment (*WB* 311). Rich's experience reproduces in miniature the challenges and trade-offs many humans experience when endeavouring to put into practice principles of ethical consumption in contemporary society.

When they begin the ascent from Pine Valley, (part of the side trip to the more remote Labyrinth area), Rich is genuinely impressed with the primeval atmosphere: "Fantastic. Huge tree ferns shook dew down onto them … moss-hung beeches and myrtles and pineapple-fronded pandani, all with fingers of dim, arcadian light pouring through trying to reach that understorey — it was all perfect. 'Beautiful, eh?' he said to Sophie" (*WB* 225–26). While it is difficult to unpick the responses of the photographer (artist) from the everyday man Kennedy provides some clear indications regarding Rich's motives. He is focused on the aesthetics and shows no interest in the ecology as he responds to the visual stimuli of the vegetation and the "arcadian" quality of light. There is no suggestion he is interested in the biodiversity of the wilderness or the intrinsic value of nonhuman species. In addition, he is distracted from any sense of physical or spiritual connection with the ancient forest because he is continually imagining and composing potential shots and article text or captions. His perceptions are always "filtered" through his artistic vision and his egoism. When coupled with his environmental activism, Rich's appreciation of the natural beauty of the wilderness, his desire for others to experience it through ecotourism, and his need to capture it on film could suggest an ecological appreciation. But Kennedy gives readers insight into his motives and they are hypocritical and self-serving. Moreover, the relatively less sympathetic representation of Rich also orients the novel's own politics. Rich resents the presence of other walkers (because they destroy the pristine illusion he is creating) while simultaneously espousing the benefits of increasing the number of tourists to the area. He uses ecotourism as an excuse to promote the value of his photography but really he just wants to aggrandise his own reputation. Furthermore, his product is not designed to share or preserve the wilderness beauty as an end in itself. It is principally a means to promote his reputation and Kennedy depicts his stated intentions of showcasing the area for ecotourism as a facade. For the most part Rich *consume*s the wilderness in order to turn it, and himself into a more marketable commodity.

As a counterpoint to Rich's generally self-interested point-of-view Kennedy constructs a strong and complex character in fifteen-year-old Sophie. She is technologically savvy, and has a sophisticated intelligence and cynicism. But she is also a closet anorexic whose unhealthy mindset and emaciated body is not detected by her preoccupied mother or her absent/self-absorbed father. Sophie is more seriously "troubled" than her dysfunctional parents yet she symbolises hope for the future through her capacity to learn and change. A novice to bushwalking and wilderness, Sophie prepares 'by the book', checking and rechecking her equipment and food supplies. She learns that any pattern of three is recognised as a distress signal in Tasmania and follows the low-impact "leave no trace" guidelines. Sophie's ecological awareness develops during the walk and within a few days she transforms from a member of the Emo-Goth sub-culture to develop an idealistic conservation ethic. Each day she relinquishes part of her Goth "costume"; one day her eye makeup, another day her dyed dreadlocks, until finally she appears "clear-eyed" and natural. Sophie's transformation from rebellious youth into responsible citizen through the "great outdoors" avoids cliché because of the teenager's discerning intellect. Her fashion and musical tastes may conform to peers, but from the beginning of the narrative, Sophie is portrayed as particularly astute when it comes to matters of environmental disaster and social justice. Despite her vulnerable health, Sophie proves herself to be a resourceful and courageous role model for contemporary young women and Kennedy positions her as a pro-environmental voice for the future.

The opposing discourses of Rich and Sophie are concentrated in their conversations about the thylacine (a dog-like marsupial commonly known as the Tasmanian tiger which is presumed extinct). Through her historical contextualising of the thylacine Kennedy introduces solemn discourse on extinction into *The World Beneath*. Soon after their flight arrives in Tasmania Rich takes Sophie to the museum in Hobart and by pretending to gather material for a documentary he gains special access to view precious thylacine remains:

> The faint sharp smell of something wild. Dark brown stripes, as delicate and precise as if they'd been painted on with a Chinese brush, dark sable on sandy fur. The marble eyes of the stuffed animal beside him stared like the deadest, coldest thing on earth. … On the shelf was a box with *Thylacine bits and pieces* written on it in felt pen. He felt an overwhelming sadness dissolve into his limbs. (*WB* 97–98)

The curator explains that the animal is presumed extinct but it originally inhabited large, densely forested areas like the Tarkine and many people "say a population could still be surviving there" (*WB* 99). There are thousands of sightings "especially on the tourist trails" and she points to a box of testimonials collected over almost a century: "The sheaf of papers was hundreds of pages thick. As she flipped through them Rich saw fountain pen, ballpoint, typescript—then computer-printed pages. A sedimentary layer of the twentieth century" (*WB* 98).

From the museum shop Sophie purchases postcards depicting thylacine-skin rugs or dead thylacines displayed by hunters. Kennedy is relentless as she satirises the commodification of the extinct animal. Released from the museum into the open air of the mall Sophie is now surrounded by thylacine souvenirs: "on every stand hung tiger key rings and tiger t-shirts and beer holders and baseball caps, tiger stuffed toys and fridge magnets; everywhere, all anybody seemed to be flogging were mementos of an extinct animal" (*WB* 101). Absorbing and reflecting on these historical and contemporary representations of the thylacine, Sophie imaginatively connects this local example with global patterns and predictions for extinction. She constructs a cynical future scenario for her generation and those to come after her:

> She could almost see how it would go: the display of solemn public regret as the last [of a species] died, … polar bears floundering and drowning across melting ice floes, starving to death … [then] a boom in snowdomes and key rings and drinks coasters, a

> million toy versions made in Chinese sweatshops. Nylon fur. The real thing gone forever. (*WB* 102)

Sophie's melodramatic predictions are given credence in the novel by international tourists' conversations about Tasmanian wildlife. Germans discuss the prevalence of quolls on Bruny Island and how they were "once all over the mainland" and the iconic Tasmanian devil which is endangered due to a contagious facial tumour (*WB* 147). A New Zealander adds: "I read somewhere that fifty percent of all native mammals originally on the mainland are extinct now" (*WB* 147). Rich, who has little knowledge or interest in endangered wildlife, finds this incredible (*WB* 147). Through her representation of extinction and its market potential, filtered through characters' thoughts and conversations, Kennedy is both topical and accurate in her interpretations of both ecotourist consumerism and the environmental crisis of extinction.

When Sophie and Rich become lost on the track to the Labyrinth, the environmental discourse intensifies in the pressure-cooker of their relationship. Rich, delirious from fever and disoriented from fog, believes he has taken three photos of the legendary thylacine and is euphoric with anticipation of his fame. Sophie, focussed on their survival and rescue, is contemptuous of her father's celebrity-seeking and greed. "There's going to be ten thousand Russells swarming over the place! Danish tour groups scouring the hills!" (*WB* 304) Insightful Sophie realises the creature will be pursued by bounty hunters for a variety of scientific and commercial reasons, possibly to "extinction" again: "'They'll try to capture it now, won't they? … They'll want to microchip it, track its movements…'" (*WB* 307). She also recognises the increased destructive impact on the wilderness by all the thylacine seekers and passionately delivers one of the rare pieces of explicit conservation dialogue in the novel as she argues her position with Rich:

> 'This whole place will be under siege.'
>
> 'You can't blame people for wanting to come to beautiful spots.'

> ‘I wish I’d never come. We shouldn’t even be here; nobody should.’
>
> ‘That’s a hopelessly idealised attitude, I’m sorry to say.’
>
> ‘Whatever wild places are left on the planet, we should just lock them up and throw away the key, keep people out of them. We wreck everything we touch.’ (*WB* 310)

Undeterred, Rich advances his argument for the benefits of ecotourism, but from a different tack, claiming the rediscovery of a presumed extinct creature would “‘exert global pressure to stop logging [in Tasmania]. Teach people how to be tourists in a whole new enlightened way. A sustainable way’” (*WB* 311). Sophie sees through his propaganda and replies with a “Soar with the vultures, Rich” (*WB* 312).

This conversation between Rich and Sophie juxtaposes the two opposing positions of preservation (from Sophie’s perspective) and ecotourism (as promoted by Rich) which currently operate in the Tasmanian community. Kennedy encapsulates some of the complexities of managing wilderness areas but does not impose a resolution. Instead readers are given “pause for thought” to form their own judgements. There is a notable absence of humour, light or satirical, in these retrospective and speculative scenarios of global environmental disasters. Kennedy’s satire is directed at individuals and political groups but she does not find anthropogenic environmental disasters, like extinctions, a subject for humour. Perhaps, like Garrard, she feels humour ultimately has limitations and she does not want to risk misinterpretation.

In a desperate attempt to heal the rift in their embryonic relationship Rich destroys what he believes to be a photo of the thylacine, apparently as a gesture of concern for the welfare of the vulnerable creature and its habitat. But, why does Rich really destroy his film? Is he prepared to sacrifice his career interests because of genuine ecological concern for the thylacine and the wilderness or does he, once again, see it as a last opportunity to win his daughter’s respect? Ultimately, his actions are ambiguous and reflect human conflict over environmental

sustainability and anthropogenic destruction globally. Rich's possible reasons—concern for his relationship with his daughter or concern for the thylacine (and its metaphorical representation of overall extinctions)—are not mutually exclusive. Perhaps Kennedy is suggesting that developing a delicate balance between self-interest (and by extension family) and concern for the flourishing of the wilderness and its nonhuman inhabitants is a more realisable goal.

Kennedy's Aesthetic

In addition to portraying controversial artistic and commercial representations of Tasmania's wilderness through satirical portraits underpinned by environmentally related themes, Kennedy herself "showcases" the wilderness in *The World Beneath*. The wilderness rhetoric in Kennedy's realist fiction, is structured around several contrasting points-of-view and modes of representation. From the point-of-view of ethical representation Kennedy herself fractures the classic wilderness aesthetic of pristine landscape by depicting large numbers of tourists and associated ecological degradation. Her own choice of aesthetics, that is, primarily her use of genre, literary tropes, language and narrative voice, adopts the dominant contemporary ecological aesthetic (realistic/naturalistic representations which avoid anthropomorphising and sentimentality) and synthesises the few elements of direct environmental representations. For example, there is a residual Romantic aesthetic manifested in the mythological framework and nomenclature Kennedy adopts and a few momentary Gothic scenarios (both which I discuss below). Conscious of the clichéd Gothic representation of Tasmania's landscape from the outset, Kennedy determines to avoid it but admits in an interview "it's pretty hard not to because Tasmania is so spectacular and so wild and so beautiful" (Interview 6). Overall though, Kennedy adopts a contemporary ecological aesthetic to represent the topography, climate, flora and fauna of the Central Plateau region. There are scant references to botanical names, Latin or otherwise but the wilderness is generally depicted through objective, observational descriptions of bog, boulders and buttongrass. There are some evocative passages dedicated to

portraying its natural beauty but, as in the following example, Kennedy successfully combines a Romantic aesthetic of euphoria with an eco-poetic reference to the micro-world of biodiversity:

> They walked towards the towering crags of mountains … the wind blowing her head clean, dreamily taking it all in, until they reached a mirror-still lake, reflecting sky and upswelling cloud. …
>
> Their two heads, when they leaned over the water, were silhouetted perfectly, the bowl of sky behind them, the bottom of the lake clear below the shadows of their faces. She could see it there, crystalline under the surface, another world furred with slow, patient algae, dropping away. (*WB* 231)

In contrast to Romantic ideologies, Kennedy's wilderness is not healing for Rich and Sophie's relationship and she delivers no clichéd happy ending for them. While discarding her Goth persona Sophie develops an ecological conscience and even Rich encounters some opportunities for self-reflection, but neither undergo the conventional spiritual transformation associated with the Romantic tropes of wilderness.

Kennedy notes that "Almost like a custodial arrangement … Greek mythology fitted easily into the Gothic landscape around Cradle Mountain National Park, with the Acropolis, Narcissus Bay and the Labyrinth" (Kennedy qtd. in Wyndham 20). Kennedy's mythological narrative conceptualisation is influenced by nomenclature originating from regional colonial history. The Central Highlands' topography inspired reverence and awe within European settlers who, in turn, generated both the ancient Greek names and the now timeworn Gothic aesthetic representation. At the time of colonial settlement (when George Frankland was initiating the Greek theme by naming Mount Olympus[38]), the Indigenous nations (Big River

[38] See Sprawson, p 88.

and North West nations) occupied parts of the Central Plateau.[39] Warwick Sprawson states that "Cradle Mountain became the last refuge of the final Aboriginal family to live a traditional lifestyle, the group managing to evade capture until 1842" and that "they continue to visit the Cradle Mountain-Lake St. Clair area to maintain the traditions of their ancestors" (28). Given reconciliation policies in current Australian politics it is remarkable that Kennedy makes no attempt to introduce an Indigenous "aesthetic" by including examples of their language, culture and especially their relationship with the bush.[40] In the interests of ecological awareness Kennedy fractures the classic wilderness aesthetic by including the *presence* of ecotourists, in much the same way that Flanagan, for example, introduces industrial pollution and logging coupes into rainforest representations. The fractured aesthetic discussed by Ian McLean, that is, of representing Indigenous *presence* and *absence* is a political minefield which Kennedy avoids. As she points out, Greek mythology serves her authorial purpose. It could be argued that as a writer, writing about the Tasmanian wilderness, she has a moral imperative to make the Indigenous visible in the same way she has a moral imperative to give voice for the nonhuman. Conversely, it is admirable that she does not pander to current politics by

[39] Richard Cosgrove claims recent archaeological evidence shows: "The Central Plateau was an area of intense Big River occupation and the border extended much further to the west than Jones indicated" (qtd. in Ryan 26). Ryan also asserts that the Big River nation was "also among the few Aboriginal nations in Australia to have gained its living in a highland and sub-alpine zone" when under pressure from the colonial invaders (Ryan 29).

[40] Kennedy does make reference to Kutakina, (the ancient Aboriginal cave) on the south-west shore of the Franklin River, through the memories of Sandy as she relives the High Court ruling to stop the Franklin dam (122).

"showcasing" and appropriating Indigenous culture through a tokenistic inclusion into a contemporary narrative.

Kennedy draws on an associated network of Greek myths to structure her characterisation and story while the particularly dense vegetation of The Labyrinth, provides an ideal setting for a *version* of the national myth of the lost or stolen child. Thus *The World Beneath* becomes contemporary mythology in Iovino's sense. The novel's title, Kennedy explains, "is a kind of reference to the story of Persephone going into the underworld with Hades and her mother sort of losing the plot back on Earth" (Interview 6). The mythological Persephone and Sophie are both young and vulnerable, and the combined narrative effect intensifies the dramatic tension in the novel. Contemporary environmental interpretation implies Rich and Sophie's disorientation signals the dangers of underestimating the rest of the natural world's capacity to *consume* the human. Like Persephone and Hades, who live a bewildered half-life in the underworld, when Rich and Sophie become lost in the fog, Kennedy creates a metaphor for contemporary human society struggling to understand the challenges of impending environmental disasters.

Initially Kennedy describes the potentially dangerous, hard to navigate area through Sophie's enthralled point-of-view: "It felt as though they were going back in time. … All around them were massive stony mountains … clusters of broken boulders, bright with green and yellow lichen, ground tipping off into cliffs and ravines" (*WB* 230–31). However, when Rich realises they are lost the landscape grows more sinister and Gothic through his point-of-view. He pictures "them both, him leading her across this vast landscape of repeated landmarks duplicating themselves slyly in every direction into infinity," (*WB* 240). Expecting to find other bushwalkers, or at least their cairns, Rich "tried to pick out the brightness of a Goretex jacket or the fluoro glow of a distant tent" until suddenly the sky turned treacherous: "It was changing before their eyes, closing in, coming down on them like early darkness. The gunmetal cold,

pressing the air flat, and the two of them vulnerable as insects on this huge cold-cracked surface" (*WB* 240–41). Now the wilderness becomes his Gothic horror: "It was like discovering a world beneath the other world, … A world which showed you the underneath of everything with such supreme indifference that it squeezed the breath out of you" (*WB* 319). The sudden onset and strength of the storm is Rich's nadir or reality-check as he succumbs to nature's ultimate dominance and indifference.

Kennedy not only represents the human impact on the wilderness but through characters' responses to changing conditions like the blizzard she also warns about the explicit risks and danger for people who venture there. In turn this has the added effect of engendering a respect for the power and regeneration of the natural world. A minor character, Ian Millard, the Police Search and Rescue officer who rescues Sophie and Rich, expresses a pragmatic and respectful attitude to the wilderness after years of observation and experience with its unpredictable climate. He is still haunted by the death of a young Swiss walker whose body he found just four hundred metres from his pack. It was as if "he'd just dozed off, … just closed his eyes against the overwhelming enormity of the view and fallen calmly asleep. … Just that hat in hand, like a last gesture of salute, or deference, or respect. Head bowed in submission (*WB* 327). Through this image of a young international tourist, his "head bowed in submission" to the snow-covered mountains, Kennedy reinforces the diminution of the human within the overall scale and power of the Tasmanian wilderness (*WB* 327). Kennedy's protagonists are rescued but she situates Millard's memories of the tragedy within the timeframe of the search for Sophie and Rich. By juxtaposing a bushwalker's death with Sophie's and Rich's uncertain (but ultimate) survival she intensifies the drama but also represents the actual treacherous and unpredictable conditions which can occur in the Central Highlands.

Kennedy's aesthetic fractures, both in terms of her stylistic and ethical representation, in *The World Beneath*, are combined with multiple points-of-view, mythological underpinning

and naturalistic language. The synthesised effect enhances the narrative and underlying themes because the blend of Gothic, Romantic, and contemporary ecological aesthetics reflects community diversity and the transitions many experience towards greater ecological awareness. In particular Kennedy offers a credible representation of current conservationist divisions, that is, locking wilderness away from humans, opening up national parks and World Heritage areas for commercial ecotourism, or a shift in cultural sensibility which involves people learning how to live in "wilderness" without destruction.

Conclusion

The fundamental ecocritical value of *The World Beneath* lies in the fictional scenarios which allow readers to imaginatively "test" (in the "laboratory" of their own moral conscience) ethical concerns through complex and often conflicting circumstances, and through a range of characters' points-of-view. The setting for *The World Beneath* is uniquely Tasmanian and reflects some of the multi-layered topographical and diverse cultural and political history of the Tasmanian wilderness. But, as I have demonstrated, the environmental issues depicted and multiple perspectives expressed are relevant globally. Despite privileging the human drama and utilising the landscape as illumination for her characters and story, Kennedy nonetheless effectively conveys the danger of human impact on fragile wilderness. Through satire and through her development of complex, flawed and ultimately credible characters she exposes the hypocrisy and pervasive nature of consumerism and the often contradictory ideals and outcomes of "showcasing" wilderness. She creates a pathway for readers to "care" in Richard Kerridge's sense, that is, "the word must encompass feeling and action as well as awareness" (363). The unrelenting images Kennedy creates of the Overland Superhighway do not enable "us to turn away too easily, and return to normality after space for reflection" (Kerridge 375). Instead, they linger in the psyche to be frequently rekindled by actual environmental events and media coverage related to ecotourism and endangered species.

CHAPTER SIX:

"'Harnessing nature'—Community, Entanglement and Alienation in Richard Flanagan's *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* and Cameron Hindrum's *The Blue Cathedral*"

"[T]his land had shaped her, shaped them all. And they it." (*SOHC* 24)

"What we do to the Earth we do to ourselves" (*BC* 102)

In Chapter Three I demonstrated how Richard Flanagan combines contemporary ecological and magic realist representations of Tasmania's wilderness, in his novel *River Guide*, to emphasise human/nonhuman kinship through primal connections. In this chapter I argue that Flanagan's later novel, *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* (1997), and also Cameron Hindrum's novel, *The Blue Cathedral* (2011), emphasise human entanglement and alienation from the rest of the natural world through stories of environmental and social devastation resulting from natural resource exploitation. Both authors explore tensions between perceptions of mutual adaptation and existing and emerging concepts of eco-harms, through their representations of Tasmania's environmental degradation, industrial pollution, and toxic communities. Ultimately, Flanagan's and Hindrum's stories offer opportunities for reflection that exceed local interests and which may benefit future practices involving new, potential environmental hazards.

Despite historical, philosophical, ecological and imaginative divisions between nature and culture, humans are embedded into the Earth which sustains them. Some believe only the skin creates an illusion of "a distinct edge, a definable limit" between humans and the rest of the natural world (Fisher-Smith 197). Others believe that people and land share "a warehouse of common memories" resulting from centuries of "mutual adaptation" occurring through a "dialectically interlaced … form of *co-presence*" (Iovino 31). Entanglement between humans and the Earth is also embodied in natural resource exploitation which feeds accelerating

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material consumption. "As we modify, degrade and destroy the lifeblood of this planet" (in a sense our extended physical selves because it sustains human life) we also threaten our own existence (R. White and Diane Heckenberg 3). Co-presence, I argue, can have a sinister dimension when manifested through instances of economically-driven disconnection from the environment, resulting in a co-dependence that ultimately leaves all communities diminished. While governments and industries depend on, and exploit, natural resources and human resources, the workers who facilitate their profits depend on the employment opportunities. In the short-term such co-dependence fulfils mutual needs but ultimately, as the texts reveal, the outcome is one of unhealthy mutual adaption. While Chapter Three focused on representations of human/nonhuman kinship reconnections, through entanglement and co-presence, this chapter discusses the dysfunctional elements (in terms of health, both environmental and human) which continue to foster alienation and undermine sustainability between the human and nonhuman communities.

Flanagan's and Hindrum's compelling narratives depict Tasmanian communities, those of Butlers Gorge and Queenstown, specifically developed as employment sources for extraction industries—large dam building and copper mining, respectively. Deforestation, ecosystem destruction and increased greenhouse gas emissions are by-products of "harnessing nature" for these industries. Flanagan and Hindrum adopt different aesthetic strategies to represent similar ethical positions—they represent human and nonhuman communities as victims of exploitation and greed by commercial industries and enterprises. Flanagan's Gothic/Romantic aesthetic adapts images of war to represent environmental and human abuse and suffering. Objective restraint, apparent in the balanced narration of events and overall tone, governs Hindrum's construction of a dialogue between political groups. He sets up, and then effectively debunks reductive stereotypes to portray the tangible complexities of a divided community. Both novels are grounded in realism and represent actual communities.

Construction workers and miners, from Butlers Gorge and Queenstown communities, collectively destroyed large tracts of Tasmanian wilderness. They also built societies whose individuals' blood, sweat, tears, and ultimately, ancestral bones rest in its soil.

These two fictional narratives create effective instruments to transmit multiple perspectives on the uses of Tasmanian's natural resources, and may encourage readers to consider their own ethical positions. In turn, "ecocritical interpretation elicits the text's ethical message and creates more visible cultural connections between text, authors, and the world that they talk to" (Iovino 40). Moreover, Flanagan's and Hindrum's twentieth-century narratives, highlighting actual local settings and events, resonate affectively (and effectively) with global environmental challenges in the twenty-first century.

Desecrated wilderness is a key backdrop in *One Hand Clapping* and *The Blue Cathedral*. Flanagan links plundered wilderness and traumatised, vulnerable refugees, "the cracked natural world and the broken human lives," while Hindrum's dispassionate representation of a politically divided community reflects aspects of environmental discord in Tasmania today (*SOHC* 22). Flanagan's and Hindrum's narratives resonate with Iovino's discussion of "literature as applied ethics." She explains that "interacting with society, a narrative can reflect the crucial issues of the time in which it is produced, and help create new 'mythologies'" (Iovino 40). She positions literature (and ecocriticism) as a means to understand the past but also to envisage the future. "It [literature] not only shows and teaches as the ancient *mythos* did, but evoking *ethical* awareness about the values it shows, it *orients* our cultural evolution" (41). In this way global lessons are learned from local events and practices—the historically layered Tasmanian "wilderness" has many human stories and many voices in its "warehouse of memories" (Iovino 31). Whose voices are going to be heard in the future, whose representations are going to retain credibility and relevance? Collective mythology is enriched through Flanagan's and Hindrum's narratives of Tasmanian peoples' relationship with the

wilderness. Their representations of uniquely "local natures" exemplify micro-patterns of entanglement that resonate with "global responsibilities" (Iovino 45).

As environmental sensibilities change concern about escalating anthropogenic impact is generating new notions of harm. "How harm is conceptualised is thus partly shaped by how the legal-illegal divide is construed within specific research and analysis" (R. White *Environmental Harm* 4). Legislation and outcomes often depend on who is defining the harm and dominant groups tend to reflect anthropocentric interests resulting in ecological concerns being "downplayed or ignored" (R. White *Environmental Harm* 5). "Moral laboratories" created by Flanagan's and Hindrum's narratives allow generations to reflect on the past, understand its legacies and anticipate the future. Integrated with recent ecological findings and contemporary ideas of eco-justice this historical knowledge (albeit represented through fictional scenarios) continues to advance understanding of human/nonhuman relationships.

Environmental advocacy, as noted throughout this thesis, did not originate in the twenty-first century and today's activism is founded on earlier campaigns. As discussed previously long-standing Tasmanian conservation movements (Tasmanian Wilderness Society, for example) were formed and consolidated after the damming of Lake Pedder. Lohrey suggests the flooding of Lake Pedder by the HEC may be a foundational narrative of the Greens Party in Australia, "the Greens' own Genesis story and Pedder is its paradise lost" (9). Despite its defeat the Pedder environmental campaign is intrinsic for Tasmania's environmental history. Pete[r] Hay explains: "'The Franklin River was saved because there was in place by the time of the Franklin campaign, a highly sophisticated, tactically skilled environment movement which hadn't come out of a vacuum. It had come from the Lake Pedder campaign.'" ("Lake Pedder"). Currently there is interest in a proposal to drain and restore Lake Pedder, but still these projects have variable success and frequently engender government and public resistance, especially in Tasmania. New global concepts of eco-justice focus on rights for the environment

per se and on the rights of certain nonhuman species (46).[41] Concepts of ecological citizenship and eco-cosmopolitanism, embraced by Emily Potter and Ursula K. Heise respectively (see above), extend our moral obligation to nonhumans and future human generations while acknowledging interdependence on a world scale.

Such global concepts are reflected in what Rob White and Diane Heckenberg observe as the "growing momentum behind the idea of embedding the crime of 'ecocide' as a 'crime against humanity'" (54). Their sociological, legal and judicial insights broaden and deepen the conceptual and linguistic scope of ecocriticism. In accord with White's concepts environmental justice centres on human populations and social justice issues related to access to healthy and safe environments for all, and for future generations. Conversely, ecological justice, is concerned with transgressions from the point of view of the intrinsic value and ecological wellbeing of, for example, forests and rivers (R. White *Environmental Harm* 3). While both concepts of justice are relevant for both textual analyses, White's notion of ecological harm tends to underpin my analysis of *One Hand Clapping* while his concept of environmental impact on human health and wellbeing tends to lead my exploration of *The Blue Cathedral*. By applying White's concepts of "green" harm as part of my analytical framework, the fictional representations of human/nonhuman alienation and entanglement from Flanagan's and Hindrum's twentieth-century narrative timeframes, are transformed into contemporary environmental discourse.

[41] An ecocentric sense of entanglement between humans and the environment is encapsulated by the long-running, but recently successful, case for legal rights and a "legal voice" for the Whanganui River in New Zealand. The resulting agreement "recognizes the status of the river as Te Awa Tupua (an integrated living whole) and the inextricable relationship of iwi (the local Maori community) with the river (R. White and Diane Heckenberg 184–85).

Abundant with natural resources Tasmania has been cultivated since ancient times to provide sustenance and/or monetary wealth for its people. The main island was unfettered for colonial development once the remnant Indigenous population was resettled on Flinders Island in 1835. Agriculture and eventually industry thrived on the natural bounty of the land. Industrialists with visions of economic growth began intensive mining projects and an ambitious hydro-electric power scheme in the late nineteenth century. The Queenstown area, rich in copper, gold and silver metal motivated the formation of The Mount Lyell Mining and Railway Company in 1893. (Closing its smelters in the sixties the company operated sporadically and at significantly reduced capacity. Under the new management of multi-national company Vedanta the mine closed in 2014 due to deaths on site). For many other Tasmanians the Hydro Electric Commission (HEC), (the centralised government supplier), became the new "god" as dam construction projects answered unemployed workers' prayers. In line with capitalist imperatives for expansion, accumulation and exchange potential, "water becomes valued according to how much it can be traded for, not simply because it is essential to human health and wellbeing" (R. White *Environmental Harm* 84). Initially intended to deliver cheap electricity for all residents, (even those in small remote areas) by the 1950s the HEC attracted investors, local, national and foreign (Felton 11). Flanagan and Hindrum capture some of these moments in Tasmanian environmental history. Tasmania's historical contexts and local industry specifics about dams, mining and forestry underpin my textual analysis. But *One Hand Clapping* and *The Blue Cathedral* also offer profound poetic expressions of the impact of extraction industries on the relationship between human populations and wild environments globally. Interwoven social and environmental connections from these local stories sustain world mythology.

Wounds of War in *The Sound of One Hand Clapping*

Written initially as a screenplay Richard Flanagan's novel *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* was published just months before the film release. Reviewing for *Island Studies Journal* Elizabeth McMahon suggests the closeness of the publication dates of the novel and the film, "invites a more reflexive reading" as a "double text" (91–92). The novel is the focus of my analysis because Flanagan gives wilderness a central role in this narrative yet it appears only briefly in the ninety-three minute film.

Writing for *Westerly* Adi Wimmer observes *One Hand Clapping* was "an enormous public success, … one of the best-selling Australian novels of all time" and was eventually placed "on the Tasmanian school curriculum" (141). Also "savaged … by many critics," negative appraisals tended to focus on the structure and sentimental ending (Wimmer 140). McMahon, for example, finds the short chapters and numerous retrospective shifts both in the novel and film "inhibits full engagement as crucial images or incidents become lost by their constant dislocations" (91–99). Wimmer finds "the novel's resolution is tender, even old-fashioned: Sonja [the protagonist] is redeemed … through her love of the baby growing within her"—in keeping with Victorian sentimentality (127–43). Lucy Frost reads Flanagan's depiction of the immigrant experience as an historical and social critique: "It questions the policies which separated refugees from any environment where normality might heal the wounds of war, and kept them confined together in remote isolation as constraining as a prison" (41). McMahon, Wimmer and Frost encapsulate the focus of much past criticism and reviews of *One Hand Clapping* —that is, the human drama and suffering. By interpreting the migrants' suffering as metaphor for the impact of the dam construction on the wilderness environment, I reverse their emphasis.

Environmental impact from white settlement also influences Clellie Lynch's review of *One Hand Clapping* in *Antipodes.* Tasmania's wilderness was "a frontier waiting to be

exploited" where "engineers and surveyors trudged through the highlands, mapped the rivers and streams, [and] tested the cliffs and ridges" (Lynch 74). Lynch's snapshot reflects a past which in many ways remains a template for the island's future. Originally, rich in natural resources Tasmania's remoteness ("a terminus of global civilisation"), and its small population has always limited its potential for economic growth (Bowman 1–2). Now, many of its extraction resources, especially in the mining sector, are already spent. Nevertheless, as environmental change biologist, David Bowman argues, paradoxically, "industrialisation" remains "the orthodox Tasmanian political response" to its current "economic stagnation" (2). Bowman further argues that Tasmania would create an ideal microcosm, a post-resource test bed for sustainability and this gives further credence to Anna Krien's notion of the island state as "the canary at the bottom of the world" (297).

This economic situation alone renders *One Hand Clapping* consistently relevant to Tasmania's environmental present and future and reinforces the novel's value as contemporary myth. Bowman argues that "this logic [industrialisation] underpinned the hydro-schemes that systematically dammed nearly every great river on the island until the Franklin was saved in 1983" (2). The waters of the Upper Derwent River, in the Central Highlands, were diverted to form seven storage lakes. One of these catchments, Lake King William, supplies the large (200 feet/67 metres high) single-arch concrete Clark Dam. Butlers Gorge, a makeshift village for construction workers building the Clark Dam, and adjacent rainforest, form the principle settings for Flanagan's *One Hand Clapping*. The narrative timeframe is post-World War II.

The novel is a story about a Slovenian migrant family—the protagonist, a young woman called Sonja, her father Bojan Buloh and her absent mother Maria. Fleeing Tito's Yugoslavia in the late 1940s Bojan and Maria spend a year in a Displaced Persons camp (where Sonja is born) before immigrating to Tasmania. Together with European and British immigrants they are housed and employed by the HEC at Butlers Gorge. Bojan labours on the Clark Dam but

soon after their arrival Maria, suffering from post-traumatic stress, commits suicide. Three–year old Sonja experiences a series of unhappy foster homes before living with her father in a "wog flat" in the suburbs of Hobart. Bojan's alcoholism and abuse of Sonja escalates culminating in her departure for Sydney on her sixteenth birthday. Despite numerous jobs and lovers, she lives a deeply lonely life only to revisit Tasmania at the age of thirty-eight. Poor, pregnant and planning another abortion, Sonja prepares to confront her traumatic past. Related by an omniscient narrator, but primarily from Sonja's point-of-view and memories, the story is structured through a series of contrasting timeframes—the narrative present, 1989/90 and flashbacks to 1954 and 1967.

Entanglement between layers of human and environmental history serves as a "mutual intensification of experience" in Flanagan's fictional representation. (McMahon 94–95). McMahon identifies Flanagan's "reconsideration of the past is crucially bound up with the particular history of Tasmania and the defining frame of its natural wilderness. This collision of history and nature is presented as one of mirrored brutality and violence." (94–95). Typically, bleak climate and dense rainforest, coupled with anthropogenic degradation from dam construction, intensifies Flanagan's portrayal of refugee suffering. Sorrowful and shocking memories from their war-torn homelands are elicited by the emotional and cultural dislocation to Tasmania.

Flanagan's tale begins with a folkloric narrative voice and an immediate sense of melancholy is established through a series of timeless losses: "all of it took place long, long ago in a world that has since perished into peat, in a forgotten winter on an island of which few have ever heard" (*SOHC* 1). The element of air, in the form of "furious blizzard" and "tempestuous billowing breath" suggests supernatural agency for Maria Buloh's suicide as she was "blown out of town" towards her death (*SOHC* 1). (It is not until the end of the novel that her fate is revealed). Flanagan's Gothic nature portrays its terrible power as a consuming force,

both annihilating and transforming, as Maria walks into the night, into the rainforest, its blackness relieved only by circling patches of falling snow. From the outset Flanagan engages readers with the mystery of her absence. Yet, narrated retrospectively, it is only days after her disappearance that a search party glimpses her scarlet-coated, frozen body hanging from a gum tree.

Flanagan's melodrama focuses on the human figure and intermittently exploits environmental elements to intensify effect. Wimmer's article includes some discussion of the environment—"The land that did not welcome"—but he also focuses on anthropocentric rather than ecological issues. In contrast to an ecocritical approach, in Wimmer's analysis neither the dam nor the water imagery are associated with either degradation or sustenance, respectively, for rainforest ecosystems. Rather, he reads "The huge dam holding back the waters" Gothically as representing "a black, demonic character" (136). He observes that "water is a second leitmotif … [that appears] not only the source of cheap electrical power, but also rain, drizzle, fog, snow" (136). Wimmer's reading, which privileges literary aesthetics and human drama in his discussion of the land is typical of the novel's critical reception.

The narrative focus shifts from Maria's mysterious departure back to the settlement, to the "grim little village" of Butlers Gorge which "sat like a sore in a wilderness of rainforest" (*SOHC* 8, 4). (Historically, culturally, economically, and ecologically Butlers Gorge represents many former hydro towns in Tasmania). Flanagan's metaphor of the construction camp as "a sore" connotes a wound, disease or source of suffering for the camp's human inhabitants who are both victims and perpetrators. This image of the camp, from Maria's point-of-view, is an extreme, but credible response from some sections of the European immigrant workers—especially those who had endured forced labour camps in the Urals or Siberia. The rows of tiny grey huts set in a cleared space in the remote highlands of Tasmania reignited these horrors from their recent pasts:

> The black-and-white scene was lit up by the stark electric lights that ran up and down what passed for street, … on either side of the street were crude vertical-board huts with corrugated-iron roofs and corrugated-iron chimneys … In this land of infinite space, the huts were all built cheek by jowl, as if the buildings too cowered in shivering huddles before the force and weight and silence of the unknowable. (*SOHC* 4)

The scene extends from this remote camp to the surrounding environment. "There were just wild rivers and wilder mountain ranges and everywhere rainforest that only ceded its reign over the land to intermittent buttongrass plains, or in the higher altitudes, to alpine moorland" (*SOHC* 4–5). Representing nature as sovereign intensifies the trope of warfare between people and the land, but vulnerable humans are not industrialisation's only victims in Flanagan's novel. The "Other" in terms of nonhuman species and the wilderness itself feature significantly (rather than tokenistically) as victims of exploitation. Many hectares of pristine wilderness and numerous animals and birds and their habitats have become collateral damage to the communities of construction workers. Nocturnal devils, quolls, possums, wombats and wallabies, mesmerised by car headlights, were "crushed between rubber and metal" (268).

> Each animal was killed easily by the men who drove drunk to and from their place of work … By day the roads were speckled red with the resulting carnage and startled hawks feasting on the carcasses would hastily rise into the air dragging rapidly unravelling viscera behind them, a shock of bloodied intestine stretching across the blue sky as if the world itself were wounded. (*SOHC* 268–69)

Again Flanagan uses language and images of war, "carnage" and "wounded," to express the violence of industrialisation and civilisation generally on the natural world.

The "sore in the wilderness" (which was Butlers Gorge) can also be interpreted as a wound or the onset of a disease harming the Earth. Established during the boom of dam building, these transient camps were serviced by roads, built for transporting heavy machinery

and accessing the dam excavation site. Considerable deforestation, habitat disturbance and destruction, biodiversity loss and erosion especially in the dammed rivers are legacies of this activity. Flanagan depicts ecological harm as intrinsic to the narrative rather than as backdrop for the melodrama. His representation of environmental loss and harm around Butlers Gorge resonates with twenty-first-century research on the ecosystem impacts of large dams: "dams and their environment interrelate with a high degree of complexity … The impact of a dam [often impossible to predict] may occur a great distance from where it is built … [and] … degradation of river ecosystems, as a consequence of river regulation, can have profound economic and social implications" with "dire long-term consequences for human well-being" (McCartney 65–66).

Whether "dams are useful or detrimental, whether they improve our environment as a whole and man's well-being or whether they spoil it" is still a question informed largely by individual political and social values (McCartney 61). Perhaps of most concern is that human communities have come to rely on dams and the proponents' claim that "more dams will be needed in the future" (McCartney 62–63). Opponents of large dams stress the health risks for workforce and local residents, greenhouse gases (from decomposition of submerged vegetation), ecosystem impoverishment and the unequal distribution of profits. Furthermore, the production of the concrete and steel needed to build a dam and the fossil fuels used to power the construction machinery, produce enormous quantities of greenhouse gasses. With the existence of renewable options (new technologies like solar for example) opponents claim "the era of large dams should be brought to an end" (McCartney 62–63). David Bowman (see above) recently notes that Tasmania's "orthodox political response" to economic slumps remains recommendations for more extraction industry (1–2). Coupled with the large dam proponents push for more dams globally, Flanagan's representation of Butlers Gorge, and the South West landscape generally, is increasingly relevant and topical.

Vivienne Condren

Flanagan does not begin his historical context in *One Hand Clapping* at this point of industrial settlement. Instead, he briefly "writes in" the Indigenous occupation and then colonisation which brought map-makers, convict track-cutters, surveyors and finally engineers:

> who made their straight lines reality in the form of the wires along which the new energy, electricity—the new god—hummed its song of promise, its seductive false prophecies that Tasmania would one day be Australia's Ruhr valley. The island, busily, almost hysterically tried to bury its memory of a recent, often hideous past in a future of heavy industry, of gigantic furnaces and enormous machines that were to be powered by the huge resources of water energy that the place possessed in abundance. (*SOHC* 21)

Electric power, "the coveted gold of the new age," is represented as alchemy. Victims, both human and environmental, are prophetically depicted as the dregs of the "alchemists' distilling flasks" (*SOHC* 22). They remained "pestilential by-products of that magical process for which nobody cared: the cracked natural world and the broken human lives" (*SOHC* 22). Toxic waste and climate change effects resonate, for contemporary readers, as Flanagan links these images of degradation to unspecified long term effects on planetary and human health: "and no-one counted the growing cost and no-one thought that tomorrow might be worse than today" (*SOHC* 22). The "huge resources of water energy" produced by the dams powered furnaces and mining smelters which in turn polluted land, air and waterways including the Queen and King rivers around Queenstown (*SOHC* 21). Exports, chiefly from mining, supplied further heavy industries overseas (Asia and Japan predominately) thus increasing global carbon emissions and ozone depletion. Although written two decades ago contemporary sensibilities of ecological citizenship infuse Flanagan's insights. In addition to evoking past transgressions he exemplifies Iovino's point that myth "reorients our cultural revolution" by alluding to future harms, not just to humans but to the rest of the natural world (*SOHC* 41).

Evidence of an embattled land remains and continues twenty years later when Sonja returns to Tasmania. She drives past "electricity transmission towers, strutting across this forlorn land like giant, muscle-bound warriors" (*SOHC* 22). The road to the west is "a writhing tapeworm of crumbling bitumen," the country is "bruised," the slow rivers carry "broken willow and bastard gorse—those new Australians of the bush—into old convict towns now unravelling like used newspapers in the wind" (*SOHC* 20). Images of injury, invasion and deterioration shift to death and survival as "occasional ancient gum trees stood as if brooding survivors of some terrible massacre" (*SOHC* 20). Signs of new (1989 timeframe) ecological harm informs Flanagan's image of deforestation which depicts non-exportable fragments of forest in the process of cremation:

> Beyond this dead land of towers and sheep Sonja drove, into the highlands, only recently cleared by the woodchippers, leaving the land as if after war: a shock as far as the eye could see of churned up mud and ash, punctuated here and there by a massive charred stump, still smouldering weeks after the burn-off of the waste-rainforest that could not be made into tissue paper for Japan. (*SOHC* 23)

Continuing through "the broken bush" Sonja eventually sees "the top of a dam giving way to an expanse of water so vast that it appeared an ocean" (*SOHC* 24). Perspective changes as the expanse of water, a human construction, is overwhelmed by the "rainforest and moorland and snow capped mountains [which] merged into a single wild land stretching away as far as the eye could see" (*SOHC* 24) Perspective shifts again as the massive concrete monument diminishes human form. Knowing "her hire car would appear only as a miserable scratch of red at the base of the huge black dam wall" she drives to the base of the aged dam (*SOHC* 26). "It was difficult to tell where the dam's concrete ended and the rock of the gorge in which it was built began" as both corrosion and bush regeneration suggested nature ultimately reigns over human efforts of control (*SOHC* 26).

Sonja recalls archival film footage from an HEC documentary, that momentarily featured Bojan labouring at the dam site. She watched her father, who "with a sledge hammer … broke stone as if it were his own mind … as boulders crumbled to gravel beneath his blows" (*SOHC* 66). Camera angles were inadequate to capture "the enormity of what was taking place, of man finally, violently and seemingly forever asserting himself over the natural world" (*SOHC* 68). Other migrant workers operated huge earth moving vehicles: "steam shovels [that] gnawed like rodents into the rock, then slowly up a new cliff hewn out of a rainforest-clad river valley. Above, roads, as if slash-marked by a mugger's knife cut across at fierce angles" (*SOHC* 68). The arsenal of "sledge hammers," "gnawing rodents" and "mugger's knives" evokes modern parallels with weapons of mass destruction but victims are the rest of nature, rather than fellow humans. An alternating pattern of victims—humans, wildlife and land and water— unfolds as Flanagan's narrative progresses. He does not, however, adopt conventional moral binaries of perpetrators and victims. Alternation, in Flanagan's poetic expression of human/nature alienation and entanglement, operates more as an ecocentric balancing device to express mutual suffering and destruction.

As she traced the texture of an aged bronze plaque fixed to the dam wall Sonja sensed the presence of "imprisoned souls" (*SOHC* 26). The dedication read, "For the men of all nations who by building this dam helped harness nature for the betterment of mankind 1955" (*SOHC* 26–27). Flanagan rapidly deflates this testament to human notions of power and progress and the symbol of human control (the dam). First, with pathos and then with images of "mortality" as the dam is subsumed by time and the dynamic cycles of wilderness regeneration:

> Numerous cream-coloured stalactites that formed from leaching calcium roll[ed] like tears down the face of the dam. … She [Sonja] felt the dramatic raking angle … its curvature at once strident and restrained, its ongoing desire to render everything around it as industrial—even nature itself. But she could see that the ageing dam was decaying

> back into the natural world, rather than, as its makers had intended, the other way around. (*SOHC* 27)

Compassion for the displaced men whose labour "harnessed" this part of nature is also apparent in Flanagan's portrayal of the extraction industry. As White argues "environmental victimisation is not a socially neutral process … some people count more than others … and the health and wellbeing of certain people will be sacrificed on the altar of profit" (R. White *Environmental Harm* 73). He explains this entanglement between environmental disadvantage and human rights as being:

> a story of lack of care for those who are culturally and socially constructed as Other, … 'socially expendable victims' … already devalued in wider community terms …. If victims are perceived as degraded in some sense, then it does not seem so unfair when bad things happen to them. (R. White *Environmental Harm* 73–74)

White's insights conceptualise, in contemporary sociological terms, Flanagan's tragic representation of the more vulnerable members of the migrant workforce. Loss of homeland, loss of family, loss of hope coupled with the daily battle against alien and unforgiving rock frequently led to moral and physical decline into alcoholism:

> A sense that they were as doomed as the trees that they felled for the geologists' tracks, as the rocks they blasted to gravel, as the rivers they were labouring to drown, … Their [own] bodies bloated or took on the shrivelled appearance of long lifeless things bottled in alcohol, back broke and hearing went with fingers and the occasional limb, brains atrophied and livers rotted yet such raddled flesh managed to rise anew each morning. (*SOHC* 181)

Such exploitation and suffering, both environmental and human, was in the service of the HEC. Flanagan's narrative demonstrates how short-term benefits were great for a few, and

good for many. It also illustrates how "casualties" among the migrant workforce, wildlife, ecosystems and waterways were numerous and ongoing.

After visiting the dam's face, Sonja drove on, to the nearby old construction camp but nothing remained of her childhood home except memories: "Butlers Gorge … where there was no nothing called anything, only strange bird cries and wind and cold" (*SOHC* 33). She observed the desecrated rainforest, where "tall manferns dripped rain upon the ageing stumps of eucalypts felled long ago to clear the site for the camp" (*SOHC* 34). However, competing with the site as a scene of nostalgic recollection, this typically remnant ghost town of a former labour intensive industry was also for Sonja a symbol of loss and harm, for humans, other species and the environment itself (see R. White "Resource Extraction" 50). Then, noticing a shard of porcelain protruding from the leaf mould, Sonja recognised the scarlet bramble design as part of her toy tea-set. Time regression accelerates as she remembers herself at three years old, systematically breaking the tea set—cup–smash, saucer–smash, plate–smash—all on the day her mother's body was found. The atmosphere becomes primordial as clouds "empty their water upon the weird and beautiful earth" and "desolate, harsh noises of Tasmanian rainforest, the wind up high in the forest canopy, the cries of black cockatoos and crows" disrupt her thoughts (*SOHC* 34). In a frenzied need to reconnect with early memories Sonja prised sods of peat apart, her elegant fingers tearing from the Earth jagged remnants of her tea-set, of her life. Flanagan alludes to the pain and joy of childbirth as Sonja, kneeling on the ground, digs "beneath the peat and beyond the wild wet earth below … so frantic and wild … digging into a land within her own skull" (*SOHC* 34). The porcelain shards embedded in layers of rainforest peat and the metaphorical "land in her own skull" (*SOHC* 34) illustrate Iovino's notion of "a warehouse of common memories" between people and the land (*SOHC* 31). Not only does this image "entangle" humans and land in a corporeal sense through the imaginative interchange between the earth and Sonja's body but possibilities for rebirth, both personal and in terms of

human/nature relationships, are introduced. The ecological implications here rest on the environmental context and on the idea of the earth as an extension of the human body needing nourishment and protection from harm.

Finding her smashed toy ignites Sonja's early memories of her mother's absence. She recalls that life-changing afternoon when two of the HEC engineers' wives temporarily took over her care. "In front of her the women had set up an upturned gelignite box, covered with a makeshift red chequered tablecloth, upon which was arrayed her toy china tea-set for her to play with" (*SOHC* 45). Flanagan's striking image of childhood innocence, juxtaposed with such violent potential, symbolically prefigures the personal abuse Sonja later endures. More literally the gelignite box demonstrates the "war" against the wilderness from industrialisation.[42]

Eventually Sonja visits her father who has moved on to yet another temporary hydro town carved out of the South-West wilderness. As she stands in the doorway of Bojan's room she surveys the town. Flanagan gestures to a Romantic ideal, only to debunk it:

> Tullah did not so much nestle in the high valley with wild mountains around all sides, as appear to be an industrial accident swept up into orderly piles, left sinking into swampy ground. Everybody, everything was temporary. Except the rainforest and the buttongrass that would come back when this brief intrusion was over. (*SOHC* 50-51)

Sonja's reconciliation with Bojan is disappointing and she resumes her life in Sydney. But something had changed for Sonja. Amongst her sorrowful memories some strange hope rekindled. Cancelling her abortion, she returned again to Tasmania for the birth of her child. Working as a barmaid in *The Blue Angel* she lived in suburban Hobart with Helvi (a friend of

[42] As a "hydro child" myself this sounds a particularly authentic "note" as I remember empty gelignite boxes reappeared in a variety of imaginative ways in backyards and houses.

her mother). Sonja wrote to Bojan to tell him he would be a grandfather soon. He never replied. Amidst his usual binges and spirals into depression Bojan had moments of lucidity. During one of these lighter times he built and carved nursery furniture for his expected grandchild. One morning he tied the cradle and cot onto the roof racks of his dilapidated FJ Holden and set off to deliver it to his daughter. Tullah, again, is described but this time through Bojan's point-of-view: "[he] felt the mist setting low in that treacherous marsh of a town … a fetid swamp in which water and men festered in a bleak valley's sag, a rotting hammock slung between high blue mountains" (*SOHC* 338). Corporeal connections between humans and environment, between "water and men" now are of mutual decay (*SOHC* 338).

Bojan's journey to the city is through a "Gothic corridor." The wild bush edging the road is momentarily visible, rendered surreal by lightning flashes and relentless, increasingly heavy rain. He drove through the wasted hills of Queenstown, the ghost town of Linda and through several remnant hydro villages. Habitually he turned off to the Clark dam site and soon noticed the flood, road gutters were running like rivers and the Derwent River was an enormous cataract. With shock, Bojan realised the unthinkable —the dam was spilling under the force of flood—nature was fighting back and human engineering was defeated. Something as ordinary as rain was all it took in the end.

> This dam which he had with his sweat helped raise so many years ago, whose concrete felt entwined with his very flesh, whose form with his soul had set like rock … the fractures were expanding into cracks and the cracks growing ever larger and the water like some caged animal that had recognised its time now pushed the pieces, at first pebbles then boulders of concrete outward with the force of missiles. (*SOHC* 344-46)

Flanagan links the material structure, the body of the dam, with Bojan's own body. His sweat and flesh are "entwined" with its concrete which, in turn, evokes Bojan's stifled emotions. Unlike his fine carpentry, the dam is not represented as the better part of himself. Instead it is

a source of misery and unnatural force and restraint. Escaping before the peak he watched from a safe distance as the dam breaks. The subsequent avalanche of water is Bojan's catharsis as years of repressed grief for Maria overwhelm him. Later he resumed his journey, driving through the stormy night to *The Blue Angel*.

Sonja was startled by her father, appearing with a cradle, in the middle of the pub. The years fell away as she remembered Bojan's skill with wood, how he sourced off-cuts from wastebins and made something good of it all—anything from chipboard, old packing cases or, when it went cheap, Huon pine, blackwood, celery and King Billy (*SOHC* 9). Flanagan reveals the irony of Bojan's position much earlier in the narrative when Sonja asked him once what he thought about all the rivers being dammed. "'Of course it's bad,' he said" (58). He told her how he loved the rainforest, how he used to walk by the banks of the river, catch trout for his tea, make a nest with branches of myrtle (*SOHC* 58). Now he was offering her part of the wilderness mixed with his sweat and love. The cradle was "Huon pine … in an ornate Mitteleuropean fashion, all fretted timber and elaborate edges" (*SOHC* 356). The cradle, in *One Hand Clapping*, symbolises numerous aspects of nature/culture entanglement. The Mitteleuropean aesthetic is a combination of several central European countries' styles. Tasmanian native timbers and this European design form a hybrid product of exquisite beauty. Previously "a new Australian of the bush" like "bastard gorse" Bojan is no longer an alien (*SOHC* 20). Now he is a hybrid citizen, at once from Slovenia and Tasmania, who is culturally and corporeally interwoven with the Tasmanian rainforest through the cradle as will be the newborn (*SOHC* 20).

Ultimately, Flanagan represents the collective migrant "voice" from the hydro camps as one of wisdom and insight, a "voice" grown profound through suffering. Bojan and his fellow dam construction workers were imbued with both ancient and recent traumas. In accord with Iovino's recommendation Flanagan "listen[s] to 'peripheral narratives' … to include them

in the order of telling; to translate them from 'vernacular' into 'history', to acknowledge them as *histories*," (*SOHC* 43). Through a dialogue between migrant labourers he fuses several peripheral stories and memories into a moving and prophetic elegy for both humankind and the environment:

> They say the tallest hardwood trees in the world are not far from here,' said the bearded Pole.
>
> [Bojan replied] 'Lucky for the Aussies we drown them all with the big dam.' …
>
> The Albanian turned and looked at the wilderness that enveloped them and laughed. The bearded Pole spoke once more.
>
> 'They think if they get the electricity then the industry will come, and then they will be like Europe, then they will have factories instead of forests, battlefields instead of potato fields, rivers that run with blood instead of water.' (*SOHC* 393–94)

Through this conversation between migrant workers Flanagan captures the ironies of industrial "progress" and also connects the local Butlers Gorge dam construction to global natural resource exploitation.

Soon after Bojan delivers the nursery furniture Sonja's baby girl is born. Bojan generally maintains sobriety and becomes a loving grandfather and father. Sonja makes regular visits to the site of Butlers Gorge with baby Maria. The infant represents new generations, mitigates the personal loss of Maria (mother and wife) and the pain of the past recedes for Sonja and Bojan. The final scene at Butlers Gorge with baby Maria and Sonja lying on the earth, the regenerated patch of land which was once the Bojan family home, evokes a sense of fulfilment and reconciliation—"this land had shaped her, shaped them all. And they it" (*SOHC* 24). Flanagan ends the novel by reference to a "cusp" of time—the point when two branches of a curve come together (*SOHC* 425).

Ultimately, the human conflicts are resolved in *One Hand Clapping* but what of the human/environment relationship? Sonja's personal growth extends to adaptation and connection with the wilderness but Flanagan includes few examples of nature's regeneration—the dam's corrosion (the bursting of the Clark dam, while real in the novel, is imaginary), the new bush growth in the Butlers Gorge village site. There are grounds for hope yet much of the wilderness degradation endures or is replaced by new forms of exploitation (in the novel and in reality). Despite conservation and restoration projects and large tracts of World Heritage listed wilderness Tasmanian wilderness remains vulnerable from extraction industries today. Mining (albeit under a stricter regulatory framework) finds new locations or gives way to forestry —both industries are hungry for hydro power at various stages of local and/or export production. In turn the chain of local to global carbon emissions increases global warming. One could argue that Flanagan's "happy ending" deflects these serious issues. On the other hand, he makes a significant case, throughout the narrative, for the detrimental impact of "harnessing nature" in wild places.

Co-presence and Co-dependence in *The Blue Cathedral*

By reading human suffering primarily as metaphor for environmental degradation I emphasised the ecological branch of eco-justice throughout my analysis of *One Hand Clapping*. In my analysis of Cameron Hindrum's *The Blue Cathedral* I focus on another branch of eco-justice—transgressions against humans from environmental impact. Hindrum's portrayal of the complex "economic co-dependency … between toxic generators and communities," and the wider social implications from these relationships of power and exploitation is at the core of my ecocritical analysis (R. White "Resource Extraction" 59). Human health and well-being, both sociologically and physically, for present and future generations, are central to my discussion.

Hindrum already has a substantial collection of poetry and short story publications. *The Blue Cathedral* (2011) is his debut short novel and another is in progress. *The Blue Cathedral* is set in Queenstown, Strahan and Warners Landing during the time of the Franklin River dam protest (1982-83). The turbulent personal life of the protagonist, juvenile delinquent Billy Anson, from Queenstown, is the nucleus of the story. Fourteen-year-old Billy's father is at home dying from cancer while Billy's mother supports the family through shift work as a nurse. Green notions of harm barely register for the troubled adolescent beyond creating opportunities for him and his mates to enjoy petty crimes and violence against protestors. Visiting protestor, Hobart university student Chris Blake, is the other significant character. Ignoring his father's advice, nineteen-year-old Chris put his university studies on hold to become a volunteer activist with the Tasmanian Wilderness Society (TWS). An idealist, Chris is willing to risk arrest (with all its long-term career implications) to stop the dam and "save the planet" (4).

Hindrum's novel is not *about* the Franklin River Blockade (FRB) per se but the human drama is played out against this historical event. The two main characters, Billy and Chris, represent socio-political divisions between two groups, the resident extraction industry workers and the visiting protestors campaigning against the proposed dam. Many of the first group are third or fourth generation residents of Queenstown and environs while the protestors include significant numbers of interstate and international visitors. Individual inter-personal relationships remain in the background as I examine Hindrum's portrayal of the unfolding environmental conflict and its social effects. The FRB is just one of many controversial campaigns which are entangled in inherited local culture, politics and corporate power-play. Historical animosities and family loyalties compete with economic and ethical imperatives resulting in an environmental complexity ideal for a "moral laboratory." Ralph Wessman notes "the analogies [of the FRB] with Tasmania's current political landscape. Many of the same players and institutions described in this book are still around, many of the issues that continue

to dominate the electorate remain much as they were decades past" (1). Hindrum's historic and topographic detail is credible for locals while the representation of a divided community captures socio-political circumstances with contemporary global correspondences. Continuing global expansion of resource extraction and its effect on vulnerable groups is discussed by White: "New technologies … facilitate ever greater extraction and processing of the Earth at a scale and pace never seen before. In the 'race for what's left', traditional and Indigenous people worldwide are especially vulnerable to the imposition of corporate power" (R. White "Resource Extraction" 55). Vulnerability and injuries, both physical and social, from environmental impact are at the heart of Hindrum's story.

From the outset a "walk in the woods" establishes the different cultures and attitudes of the two teenagers. When Billy needs "time-out" from his parents, school and criminal mates he walks to Perch Rock, a flat rock on a "small natural plateau near the top of the naked hill behind [his] house" (*BC* 15). A narrow path, over his back fence, leads through gorse and blackberry to an old bridge across the Queen River. "The river runs grey with dollops of waste pumped into it from the copper mine at Mount Lyell. Billy barely notices as he walks over it" (*BC* 15). Hindrum's representation here reflects actual contemporary conditions resulting from over a century of mining at the Mt Lyell copper mines. The King and Queen rivers remain heavily polluted and this has killed almost all aquatic life (R. White "Resource Extraction" 57). Generations of Billy's family have depended on the mine for their livelihood and he intends to work either in the mine, or on the new dam construction. Billy's response to the polluted landscape—he "barely notices"—is in accord with White's research into co-dependencies between extraction industries and their workforce (*BC* 15):

> Such communities are more tolerant … This, too, can affect regulatory posture and engagement in such situations. Environmental injustice thus sometimes occurs with the implicit consent of those most likely to be negatively affected in terms of health

> and wellbeing. Denial of harm can translate into "not seeing" what is right in front of one's eyes because of the assumed benefits from the industry. (R. White "Resource Extraction" 59)

Still out of breath Billy slumps on the Perch and lights a cigarette. Through his exhaled smoke he observes Queenstown "stitched into the bottom of the valley" (*BC* 15). According to a travel article in *The Sydney Morning Herald* Queenstown is "a surreal nightmare … by any measure … one of the wonders of the world. It is a profound reminder of humanity's capacity to destroy and pollute and, in that sense, it deserves to be seen by everyone" ('Queenstown' 1). Although Billy's father notices the rust-coloured and treeless mountains he still perceives a kind of beauty, "a kaleidoscope of shifting pinks and purples," in Mt Owen which he imagines as the town's "constant guardian" and "patient monarch" (*BC* 60).

Depictions of Billy's "habitat" and "habit" reveal aspects of his entangled environmental and personal health. Invasive species, "naked hill" and the toxic waste polluting the river govern Hindrum's environmental description (*BC* 15). Inhaling cigarette smoke into his adolescent lungs Billy transcends the degradation by gazing into the summer sky "clean and clear, vast and high, an endless cathedral ceiling" (*BC* 15). (Billy's father, who spent his working life underground in the mines, initiated the metaphor of blue sky as a cathedral). Given links between extraction industries and climate change effects Billy's image of a "clean and clear" sky over a town in the shadow of mining furnaces and smelters is illusory and ironic (*BC* 15).

Hindrum uses the contrasting individual lifestyles of Billy and Chris to preface the differences between the two opposing camps of HEC workers and Greenies. A TWS protestor, Chris is hitchhiking from Hobart city to Strahan via Queenstown. When lifts are scarce he decides to "embrace the elemental simplicity of walking" (*BC* 16). While Billy is depicted amidst the pollution of mining and cigarette smoke Chris enjoys "the scent of wattles and

leatherwood," (*BC* 16). About to lose the light thirty minutes out of Queenstown, Chris camps in ferny bracken just off the roadside. Attuned to the sensory pleasures of the bush, its smells and shadows, "Sleep, in the cocoon of his swag in the embrace of the native bush, comes easily" (*BC* 18). Billy appears oblivious to the ecocide of his residential area while Chris is enamoured by the adjacent wilderness beauty, and determined to conserve it for future generations, Chris naïvely believes that "any sensible person could see that it was worthwhile" (*BC* 18).

Ostensibly Billy and Chris both have the support of loving parents. Chris's' father is a healthy policeman but Billy's father, a miner, is bedridden in the last stages of lung cancer. "In the hole in his life where his father should be there is nothing now but coughs and curses" (*BC* 115). Dennis Anson is a heavy smoker but only thirty-five years old. Through Billy's point-of-view, smoking is deemed the cause of his father's lung cancer, "Fuckin' damage is done now, he thinks. Bloody packets should have warning labels on them" (*BC* 34). Smoking is portrayed in *The Blue Cathedral* as a common habit in the Queenstown community. Susan, Billy's mother, also smokes yet both addicted parents warn their son of its risks. It is interesting that within the narrative timeframe (1982) tobacco companies were legally required to display the warning "smoking is a health hazard" in small print. Whether Billy's comment about tobacco labelling is sarcastic, whether he is seeking reasons to absolve his father from responsibility or whether he just doesn't notice the warning label (he doesn't notice the "dollops of waste" in the Queen River) is not explicit. Whether pollution from the mines contributed to Dennis Anson's cancer is not addressed in the narrative yet medical research studies indicate strong correlations between lung cancer and copper mining in particular (Ruoling Chen 505). The culture of the mining community however, where smoking is prevalent, could have contributed indirectly to his cancer by raising his chances of becoming a smoker. Research links smoking to social deprivation: "Those with lower levels of education were more likely to smoke and the greater the level of education the less likely a person was to smoke" (Miller and Hickling 2). Through

subtle associations, rather than explicit moralising, Hindrum leaves readers to "connect the dots" in terms of human health effects from mining environments. Such lack of explicit connection, however, effectively reinforces community attitudes of denial (or lack of awareness) represented in the narrative. This strengthens character credibility and is in accord with Hindrum's restrained aesthetic. It does, however, risk leaving readers uninformed about the impact of copper mining on human health. In turn this engages moral debate regarding authorial responsibility, or otherwise, in terms of evoking the precautionary principle.

Levels of formal education differ markedly between the two boys and also between the represented community groups. Believing school has become irrelevant for him Billy is a chronic truant. With the main source of employment, the mines, depleted new industry is urgently needed to float the community economically. Stopping the proposed dam construction will force Billy (and most of the Queenstown breadwinners) into welfare or to seek employment prospects beyond home and family. Hindrum's fictional narrative increases in credibility when viewed through the lens of current sociological research: "The breaking up of communities, the displacement of individuals, the loss of economic livelihood and dispossession of land all constitute varying forms and degrees of harm and victimization of human populations" (R. White and Heckenberg 181). Prospects for Chris, on the other hand are presented as much brighter. A university education is expected to offer many opportunities. Despair and hope embody the underlying difference between the teenagers' attitudes to their futures.

Hindrum constructs several social scenarios to represent the contrasting lifestyles and values of Chris and Billy. The narrative setting shifts from Queenstown to the Gordon River and the opposing camps clustered around the main protest area, Warner's Landing. The boatman, Bugs, who is transporting the novice protestors down river, points out the political boundaries. Hindrum constructs a divide between HEC workers and Greenies primarily

through their attitude to violence. As they glide down the river Bugs informs them: "Some of the Hydro fellers are camped in there. Rumour is they sleep with cricket bats and tyre levers in their sleeping bags, ready to crack skulls if they have to. Stupid bastards" (*BC* 36). When Chris and his group arrive at the Greenie camp veteran no-dams protestor, Jock, checks they have completed their NVA training (non-violent action training). A media campaign is planned for the following day and the evening is spent discussing tactics. Jock advised them on what to expect: "Blocking the road, the river, chaining ourselves to the gear, the gates on the road, anything to stop them working. Anything. What we don't do is provoke confrontation" (*BC* 38-39).

Conversation around the campfire reveals the Greenie ideals, values and lifestyles as they discuss the ecological significance of trees and the need for government intervention. The HEC, "a voracious beast" … "[is] just too big and powerful" … "no one has the money to take the Hydro to court" (*BC* 16, 43). "Chris can smell the rich burnt-compost odour of dope, closes his eyes and breathes in" (*BC* 39). The sensually appealing inclusion of cannabis smoking (illegal in Tasmania) adds an interesting twist to Hindrum's representation of the lifestyle differences between the two groups. Billy's tobacco smoking is embodied within a context of pollution and illness. Cannabis smoking (perceived to have health benefits but also revealed to have health risks including links to psychosis) is portrayed, through Chris' point-of-view, as part of a wholesome and innocent scenario. Complexities are beginning to emerge within the superficially stereotypical group constructions.

Back in Queenstown, Billy is hanging out with his delinquent mates, Kraut, Pete, Troy and Dion. Along with a slab of tinnies they are packed into an old XC Falcon on the road to Strahan. Sabotaging the Greenie stations in the town is their entertainment and this evening they vandalise the Green's headquarters and attack the leader of the Greens Party with a jack handle: "'Fuckin Bob Brown,' Pete says. 'Fuckin hate that hippie poofter'" (*BC* 11). Pete and

his mates have a "campaign" of their own planned and invite Billy to join. The local liquor store owner is trading in black-market pornography and the boys burgle his stock of alcohol, cigarettes and illicit videos and magazines. Later Billy helps Pete unload the ute and receives a few copies of *Young Sluts* as payment.

Women, in *The Blue Cathedral*, represented by Susan, (Billy's mother) and Mandy, (the Green's campaign strategist) are depicted as strong and capable in both socio-economic groups. They are not sexualised through the male gaze, nor are they represented through traditional mother-nature imagery. Chris is infatuated with Mandy. A brief description of her appearance is conveyed through his point-of-view, "her lithe figure [is] hidden under a loose green wool jumper and flannelette shirt, her long-honey-blonde hair contained in a pair of casual ropey plaits" (*BC* 64). There is nothing sexual or even particularly sensual in this image. In keeping with the progressive Green ideology Hindrum focuses Chris' attention, and readers' attention, on Mandy's intellect, strong personality and values rather than her appearance. Her manner and speech is not feminised (by this I mean characterised by self-effacement, gratitude and soft delivery) but direct and challenging. She is a committed activist and Chris is impressed rather than intimidated: "Chris is not surprised by the vehemence of her answer. Mandy's resolve is one of the things he likes about her" (*BC* 66).

By this stage in the narrative Hindrum has successfully set up stereotypical differences between the two political groups, through individuals, and opposing group dynamics. Extreme versions of the rival factions create a simplistic picture of good versus evil. Violence, crime and self-interest characterise Billy, his mates and the HEC workers. On the other hand, the Greenies are portrayed as self-sacrificing, noble, socially progressive and globally responsible. While acknowledging that "stereotypes cannot be simply dismissed, since they are so often voiced and contain elements of real substance, like rocks in snowballs," Edward O. Wilson asserts the importance of "disarming" them (*Future of Life* 152). In the "war" over the

wilderness that remains Wilson claims, “the most destructive weapons to be stacked are the stereotypes, the total-war portraits crafted for public consumption by extremists on both sides” (*Future of Life* 152). Hindrum effectively “disarms” his stereotypes in the second half of the narrative leaving only a handful of characters within the reductive categories he established. Instead Hindrum portrays the complexities between and within both communities. In reality the FRB protestors are battling against the government and corporate backed HEC. The local workers are not their intended victims yet they will suffer most (in the short term) when the protest to stop the dam and save the river from degradation succeeds.

Physical and ideological clashes at Warners Landing “over the very real fear of job losses and economic insecurity pitted against the conservation value” attracted interest nationally and internationally projecting Tasmania as “the world’s first ‘Green laboratory’” (Wessman 1). Hindrum’s literary representation of these events and communities adds another voice to Tasmania’s collective mythology. Dennis and Susan Anson are victims of both extraction industry policies and conservation ideals. Their snapshot history, representing the average hard-working family, economically reliant on mining, is compassionately revealed through Dennis’s point-of-view and memories. “Dennis had hardly ever left Queenstown. … he was third or fourth generation, his sweat lost in the depths of the copper mine and his blood spilled on the gravel footy ground like his father’s before him” (*BC* 60). Like Flanagan’s migrant dam builders, Dennis has become corporeally and sensually, as well as culturally, part of the wilderness. “He has become attuned to the rhythm of the years here, the constant rain, the cold, the occasional snow, and the searing hot summers when the town baked in the heat reflected off the crown of bare hills” (*BC* 60). Susan is described as “A good woman in a hard town” (*BC* 60) He regrets not giving her a better life: “Burnie maybe, worked at the pulp mill there. Had the sea to look at every day, instead of the crown of rust-coloured and treeless mountains” (*BC* 60). (Reference to Burnie is ironic for locals. For years the foreshore was

coloured grey and orange from waste from local industry. It was listed as an area of environmental concern (AEC)).

Tensions are complex when local injustices are framed against green ideology as Chris, Mandy and activists conduct their campaign. Slogans including "we claim the forest for the planet, … this is the property of the citizens of the world [and] This is the property of our children and their children'" are at the core of what they believe to be a noble cause (*BC* 48). Interestingly, the intrinsic value of the wilderness, the premise of White's *ecological* concept of harm is not explicit in the activists' rhetoric. Instead, dialogue within the green group illustrates their sense of ownership of the river and forest as Mandy dismisses the Queenstown miners and their families as "hostile locals" (*BC* 69). While this is arguably so, there is a disturbing absence of interest for the immediate effects on the Queenstown community if the dam project is stopped. Current health or social wellbeing of the locals is easily transcended by the protestors' belief that everyone's children will benefit in the long run. Chris seems oblivious to the irony of his own position when he says: "'I couldn't live in a state that imposes something like this on its people without any consultation whatsoever'" (*BC* 67). Hindrum's portrayal of the Anson family illustrates that wilderness conservation for recreational activity is not a luxury that locals can afford. Effectively, the green protestors are imposing their values on the local mining population. The generally more privileged protestors, "blow-ins," (in lingua franca), risk or lose very little in terms of everyday lifestyle and well-being. Symbolically they take possession, or colonise, the wilderness, making decisions from what they assume is a superior value system to that of the "Indigenous" Others, in this case families like the Ansons. For the activist group the wilderness becomes "our natural heritage," "our unique environment" (*BC* 102). Later they launch a media performance in which they wed themselves to the Earth: "today we marry our collective spirit to this ancient wilderness" (*BC* 106). Mandy delivers a moving speech:

> Today we pledge to honour this entwined spirit with love and integrity. Today we show that we care. Today we show that we have universal and immutable compassion for the Earth. Ghandi said that we must be the change we wish to see in the World. Today we become that change and we vow collectively to keep our Earth as it was intended to be, clean and pure and intact from harm. (*BC* 106)

Like the delinquent element in Queenstown, the Greenies also have their own dissenters, dissemblers, and dishonesties. The "game-player" Garry epitomises this faction through misogynist attitudes, sarcasm and a self-interested desire to work out old grudges against the police. Hindrum also gestures to entrenched Tasmanian prejudices between the South and North of the island. From Hobart (in the South) Mandy calls Garry "A pathetic sexist pig," adding "He's from Launceston" (in the North) (*BC* 70). In addition, the police themselves are depicted as a politically and ethically divided group. Chris' father arrests numerous protestors, but lets his son escape, while Chris tricks a police sergeant into giving the protestors a conditional reprieve and then double crosses him. Cronyism and betrayal, at this level, may be minor crimes compared to the violence perpetrated by Billy's mates, but through these scenarios Hindrum reveals that both factions can be dishonest, unethical and prejudiced.

The essence of the socio-political divide is captured succinctly in the final stages of the novel when the High Court Intervention to stop the dam is announced. Authorial restraint conceals Hindrum's own political position as he cuts to the core of the division through contrasting dialogue. Billy is eating his dinner of baked beans when the television broadcasts "the scenes of jubilation in Hobart" (*BC* 139). Mandy is speaking to the news reporter:

> 'Can you give me a sense of what this means for Tasmania?' …
>
> 'This is the most important day in Tasmania's history. …it's a huge victory not only for Tasmania but for unique heritage sites around the world.'
>
> [the film cuts to another reporter interviewing HEC workers at the Strahan pub]

> ‘The Tasmanian people needed this dam, … the bloody hydro’s not gonna keep buildin’ dams forever, how do we put bloody food on the table? .... Those bloody hippies … didn’t bloody think a’ that, did they?’ (*BC* 139–140)

Shocked by the decision Billy recalls Premier Robin Gray reassured them of the proposed dam saying “‘The world has plenty of rivers,’” (*BC* 140). He remembers his mother criticising the Greenies for trying to deprive the townsfolk of economic stability: “‘Why the hell were trees so important? Queenstown’s always looked all right without them’” (*BC* 140). This short piece of dialogue pinpoints the difference in education level, needs and worldviews between the two groups. One is short term, basic and co-dependent, the other is long-term, progressive and privileged. Given local and global environmental injustice and degradation both points are valid but appear to be at an impasse in Hindrum’s narrative (set in 1983). In this regard they represent similar socio-political divisions regarding tourism development in Tasmania today. Significantly, both points of view are anthropocentric, neither consider the wilderness as having an intrinsic right to flourish irrespective of its value to humans. While Mandy and the protestors pledge to “nurture and protect, and sanctify and cherish, that which is inviolate and pure” the wilderness is still valued as a wellspring of spiritual forces that sustain the Western soul (*BC* 107). Nonhuman species, ecosystems, soil or water are not valued except in terms of human, spirituality, sustainability or recreation. The absent element in this scenario, for contemporary ecocritical discourse, is ecocentrism. While this philosophical and social position might be a step or two away for conservationists it is a much longer journey for the miners and their families.

The timeframe shifts to a month after the High Court decision and to the final narrative scene which is Dennis Anson’s death bed. He is suffering now, sweating, groaning and too weak to stand. Billy reaches across and turns off his oxygen supply before suffocating him with a towel until he is still and silent. In addition to Dennis’ physical death, removing the resource

of oxygen symbolises the inevitable end of individual livelihoods and communities around the Queenstown area. Generations of local "mutual adaptation" and entanglement between humans and the land are under the shadow of "death." Characters and events in *The Blue Cathedral* depict attitudes at the time—Queenstown was expected to become a "ghost town" like Butlers Gorge in Flanagan's *One Hand Clapping.* Hindrum ends the narrative with this expectation—giving the last "word" to the broken community. For contemporary environmental sensibilities, however, the "death" of mines and dam proposals facilitates progress towards the ecological health and regeneration of the planet which, in turn, extends sustainability to its populations.

Conclusion

Toxic towns like Queenstown and Butlers Gorge, which impact on human and nonhuman health and wellbeing, are preserved in local stories like *One Hand Clapping* and *The Blue Cathedral.* Both Flanagan and Hindrum employ primarily realist settings to achieve an authentic representation of harm to wilderness, and to extraction industry communities. Flanagan expresses injustice and destruction through the metaphor of war while Hindrum reveals entanglement and tensions within ideologies of co-presence, and the realities of co-dependence.

Both novels serve as learning experiences for future practices which carry new potential hazards. Extraction industry opportunities and knowledge of environmental degradation (including global warming) have changed dramatically since the twentieth century yet today the mindsets of local politicians and investors are still dominated by the past. Many resources in Tasmania, for mining in particular, have dwindled or expired and market prices have "killed" the hoped for "forest-led recovery (Bowman 2). New methods of extraction like fracking "carry with them new dangers and new potential harms. … In the United States, as with Australia, a major concern is that hydraulic fracturing fluids used to fracture rock formations contain numerous chemicals harmful to human and environmental health, especially if they enter

drinking-water supplies" (R. White and Heckenberg 171). There is now an urgent need for public risk assessment as "prime agricultural land in eastern Australia is being dotted by an increasing number of coal-seam gas wells" (R. White and Heckenberg 171). (In 2015 public pressure on the government resulted in a five-year moratorium on fracking in Tasmania (Fracking)).

Flanagan's and Hindrum's representations of extraction industry impact on populations and air, water and land, are increasingly relevant for current environmental discourse, and not just locally. Old habits, mindsets and prejudices prevail especially when potential profits are concerned. "When it comes to measuring the value of human life some people [still] count more than others" (R. White and Heckenberg 178). Economic dependence continues to foster recipient tolerance and denial as victims' "habitats" become the processing and dumping grounds for richer nations. For example, "the open burning, acid baths and toxic dumping pour pollution into the land, air and water and exposes the men, women and children of Asia's poorer peoples to poison" (R. White and Heckenberg 178).

In Tasmania, new mining management in Queenstown is not obliged to take responsibility for rehabilitating past degradation. New regulations and practices, however, have been implemented for stricter pollution and waste control. A clean-up effort for past transgressions is very slow and "it will probably take centuries for the King and Queen rivers to fully recover" ("Acid Mine"). "Fundamentally Tasmania is currently asking the same questions that Australia [and ultimately the rest of the planet] must answer once the resources that underpin our economy are exhausted" (Bowman). For now, green activism and growing awareness regarding environmental sustainability, while still comparatively embryonic in some areas, are gathering impetus in others.

One Hand Clapping and *The Blue Cathedral* serve as contemporary mythology in the sense that past environmental legacies can reorient our conceptualisation, our ethical awareness

and our management of the environment (Iovino 41). Policy failings of the past (harms to the environment and refugees, human and others) are depicted in Flanagan's novel while seemingly irreconcilable differences for communities divided along historical socio-political lines are central to Hindrum's work. Human populations, as victims of injustice from corporate and government policies, are at the centre of both novels. Flanagan's narrative provides an enduring voice and a "moral laboratory," the implications from which have potential for developing a more constructive future ethic. Hindrum presents an unbiased account of co-dependence between a toxic industry and a community threatened by green ideology. Both narratives reveal past *ecological* and *environmental* harms in the South-West wilderness, some of which, through different manifestations, are ongoing in Tasmania and other parts of the globe.

Wilson argues that *Homo sapiens* in 2100 will remain "a relatively unchanged biological species" which explains both our strength and weakness (*Future of Life* 76). He calls for "conscious restraint" reminding us that, "It is the nature of all biological species to multiply and expand heedlessly until the environment bites back" (*Future of Life* 76). If the Earth is our extended body and we have higher consciousness, then ethical responsibility for planetary health and vulnerable species (human or nonhuman) is ours. Wilson's warnings are echoed through the pleasure of fiction in *One Hand Clapping* and *The Blue Cathedral*. Flanagan's and Hindrum's novels work as advocacy, as environmental citizenship, in two particular ways. They inspire activists. They also raise awareness within victimised, co-dependent communities and this potentially encourages them to challenge the legislative framework that enables polluters and to demand improved conditions. Both novels remind and alert readers that fragile wilderness, and economically vulnerable people, continue to be under threat from exploitative industries and enterprises that "harness nature" by adopting harmful and unsustainable practices for short-term gain.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

"Writing in the midst of an unfolding disaster"—the ethics and aesthetics of representing anthropogenic extinction in Julia Leigh's novel *The Hunter*

"she greets each day as a new opportunity to track the scent of a mate" (*TH* 66)

Competing tensions, culminating in an ethically controversial narrative outcome, structure Julia Leigh's novel *The Hunter* (1999). A paradox of despair and hope informs much critical opinion, which views the novel's ending as motivating and/or relentlessly bleak. Leigh's potentially alienating aesthetics, I argue, eventually enable and complement her ethical representation of the sobering reality of human impact on the diversity of life on Earth.

Rigby links our capacity to *imagine* better or worse futures with our capacity to *act* and thus generate environmental reform ("Imagining Catastrophe" 69). Her concept of hope expressed through prophetic imagination underpins my interpretation of *The Hunter* ("Anthropocene" 4). Leigh frames her representation of the "unfolding disaster" of anthropogenic extinction through a "second chance" for the Tasmanian thylacine. More significantly, this fictional "second chance" creates an opportunity for humans to behave differently while Leigh's narrative creates a "moral laboratory" to observe ethical changes. Ultimately, *The Hunter* engages readers intellectually and affectively, not only with the demise of the thylacine but with humanity's relationship with nonhuman species, and by extension, the rest of the natural environment.

Leigh's narrative centres on a hired mercenary, who assumes the name of Martin David (once introduced to readers by his full name he is then referred to as just "M"). He is searching for the recently sighted, but presumed extinct, thylacine (commonly known as the Tasmanian tiger). M is employed by a Sydney based bio-technology company seeking thylacine DNA for biological weapons (antidote or virus is not specified, and M doesn't care). The narrative timeframe is the 1990s and the main setting is the southern part of the Tasmanian Central

Plateau towards the Florentine Valley where the last thylacine was captured in 1936. The Armstrong homestead, at the foot of an escarpment is M's base camp. Lucy and Jarrah Armstrong and their two children Sass and Bike arrived from interstate two years earlier. Jarrah, an academic has been missing (presumed dead) from a field trip for over a year. Lucy, debilitated by grief, exists in a twilight state of prescription drugs and sleep while the children fend for themselves. M pretends to be a university researcher studying the Tasmanian devil. He survives months in the wilderness, eventually kills the thylacine and thus fulfils his mission to harvest the animal's organs. Leigh's bleak narrative ending subverts reader expectations by leaving her "natural man" protagonist unredeemed. Controversially the film version of *The Hunter* (which I analyse in the following chapter) depicts the death of the thylacine as a mercy killing and thus M becomes a reformed hero. This different moral outcome for the protagonist creates a number of ethical implications in terms of representing anthropogenic extinction, which sharpen and deepen the discussion of Leigh's controversial ending. This logic governs my decision to compare the different endings prior to a detailed analysis of the film. This approach also allows for an undistracted ecoGothic interpretation of the film in Chapter Eight.

The Hunter novel, published twelve years before the film was released, received conflicting reviews, attracting some strong negative criticism in Tasmania. Local preoccupation with Leigh's portrayal of Tasmanian identity is perhaps unsurprising. Martin Flanagan is scathing about the "narrow range of roles made available to Tasmanians by the author," suggesting it was "a clear-felling of local cultures" (4). Nationally and internationally critics were more favourable in their pro-environmental interpretations. Sally Borrell concedes that *The Hunter* "conveys little sympathy for Tasmanian society, portraying aggressive logging workers and ineffective hippy conservationists" (64). Borrell, however, offers a broader explanation suggesting "these groups could alternatively be interpreted as a frustration with human attitudes more generally" (64). Given the global dimensions of Leigh's representation

of extinction Borrell makes a valid point. Drusilla Modjeska focuses on the significance of the thylacine and whether it functions as "guilt for the past," … "the capacity to live in harmony with nature?" or "hope for the future?" (9). Tony Hughes D'Aeth reads it in terms of contradictions within radical "deep ecology" (28), Scott Brewer argues that it represents "sublime loss" (1–10) while Borrell believes it "illustrates the vulnerability of very localised species … and the urgency for environmentalist and conservationist efforts" (63). Kylie Crane's comprehensive analysis reads the thylacine "as a symbol for a colonial past and for changing beliefs in nature" ("Tracking the Tassie Tiger" 105). The "real villain" in *The Hunter*, according to Crane, is the obscure biotechnology company and she positions M as "simply an agent" ("Tracking the Tassie Tiger" 117–18). Greg Garrard also highlights the morally complex role of biotechnology in *The Hunter*: "As Leigh's novel shows, genetic diversity is increasingly seen as a resource for bio-technology companies as well as the object of potentially comprehensive protection" (*Ecocriticism* 179).

Leigh's novel reminds us that, in the words of biologist Edward O. Wilson, "Earth has at last acquired a force that can break the crucible of biodiversity" (*Diversity of Life* 343). Wilson refers to *Homo sapiens* as "serial killer[s] of the biosphere" and claims "species are disappearing at an accelerating rate through human action, primarily through habitat destruction but also pollution and the introduction of exotic species into residual natural environments" (*Future of Life* 94; *Diversity of Life* 346). In accord with Wilson, Rigby identifies the moral responsibility inherent in the predicted sixth mass extinction[43] on Earth and she questions the lack of public response:

[43] 9th June 2015 Stanford University biologists (including Paul Ehrlich) confirmed that "There is no longer any doubt: We are entering a mass extinction that threatens humanity's existence" (Stanford 1).

> It is] the first [extinction] to be brought about by a single species whose members are capable of understanding what they are doing and of making a moral choice to act otherwise.
>
> In the face of this manifest evil, whereby countless species are being heedlessly exterminated, the intricate mesh of life on Earth torn to shreds … why are there not weeping prophets on every street corner, pleading with us to change our ways before it is too late? ("Imagining Catastrophe" 67)

Leigh's tragic narrative in *The Hunter* fulfils Rigby's concept of a "weeping prophet" in terms of secular environmental advocacy for contemporary Western readers.

While Rigby asks "why are there not weeping prophets on every street corner" Wilson asks an even more vital question about anthropogenic extinction—"why should we care"? (Rigby "Imagining Catastrophe" 67; E. O. Wilson *Diversity of Life* 346). Wilson writes extensively on the impact of extinction, listing a variety of benefits from biodiversity in terms of biological wealth. He also reminds us that soil and air quality, by-products of ecosystem services, sustain human life (*Diversity of Life* 347). Wilson concludes that "we have cut much of the heart out of biodiversity. The conservation ethic, whether expressed as taboo, totemism, or science, has generally come too late and too little to save the most vulnerable of life forms" (*Future of Life* 102).

The Thylacine's Historical, Ecological and Cultural Context

Interpretation of *The Hunter* is enhanced through an understanding of the animal's natural history and the cultural context of its extinction. In *The Song of the Dodo* Quammen discusses the patterns of species distribution peculiar to islands. He "happily" finds island biogeography "full of cheap thrills," "gaudiest life forms" and "a catalogue of quirks and superlatives" (17–18). He lists Tasmania along with Madagascar, the Galapagos, New Zealand and several other

islands as home to unique species. Quammen explains that as "natural laboratories of extravagant evolutionary experimentation" small and isolated population sizes are especially vulnerable to extinctions (18).

Wilson correlates some extinction patterns with human appetites. The dodo from Mauritius, for example, "were hunted mercilessly during the short time in which Europeans came into contact with them … [as a] very useful source of fresh meat for travellers in the Indian ocean," (Quammen 268). Also, the passenger pigeon, (although not an island species) inhabited the eastern half of North America yet "within a short span of time, its population went from roughly three billion to exactly zero" (Quammen 307). A threat to human crops, passenger pigeons also provided a popular food source both for local and export markets.[44] The thylacine, which features as the hunter's prey in Leigh's novel, does not comply with gustatory patterns. Generally the thylacine did not fulfil human taste preferences and even if it had it does not necessarily follow that it would have been hunted to extinction—it may have been cultivated as a delicacy.[45] There is a more complex story, than that of the dodo or the passenger pigeon to explain the thylacine's victimisation by humans. Its natural history is particularly relevant to Leigh's narrative because of the associated moral and ecological patterns of human behaviour.

David Owen's publication *Thylacine: The Tragic Tale of the Tasmanian Tiger* (2003) provides a comprehensive account of the thylacine's rise and demise. Depending on the

[44] Quammen writes extensively about the barbaric slaughtering of the passenger pigeon and the similarities of its extinction pattern with the thylacine (Quammen, 306–12).

[45] While it was not a traditional part of their diet "Aborigines are known to have hunted them [thylacines] for food, but this would have been in a strictly utilitarian manner, in no way threatening the species' existence" (Owen, 24).

sensibilities at the time, the thylacine (a marsupial mammal) has been likened to a hyena, a tiger, a dog, a native-dingo and a small wolf (Owen 12–13). It is characterised by several distinct features—a series of black horizontal stripes across a tawny-coloured body, a large slack jaw and an unusual gait. Owen discusses mass extinctions in general and anthropocentric extinctions in particular. He explains that "There have been two quite distinct thylacine extinctions, first on mainland Australia and New Guinea, and subsequently in Tasmania" (29). Owen acknowledges several contributing factors to mainland extinctions, including human impact, but he argues that in Tasmania humans systematically hunted the thylacine to extinction.

Owen positions his research within the moral context of the thylacine's relatively recent extinction on the Island: "the loss of the thylacine glaringly symbolises wanton, careless destruction of the natural world. … Thylacines were neither pest nor vermin but simply a perceived obstacle to nineteenth-century progress. And whether snared or shot, they were also a source of bounty income" (25–26). Sheep-protection generated a bounty which rapidly eroded a relatively small estimated population of five-thousand thylacines: "over two thousand [were] presented for government bounty between 1888 and 1912" (Owen 26). Yet many sheep attacks lacked evidence of the actual culprit and could just as readily be attributed to wild dogs. Furthermore, and perhaps even more tragically for human history, "naturalists, scientists and others, such as the artist John Gould, had been warning of the thylacine's possible demise since the middle of the nineteenth century" (Owen 26). Sadly, the legislation to protect the species came too late, just two months before the last known thylacine died in captivity at Hobart's Beaumaris Zoo. Symptomatic of the Great Depression, Hobart Council funding cuts and subsequent neglect are widely attributed to its death from hypothermia (Owen 133–34).

Owen refers to the thylacine as a "high profile victim" and both he and Carol Freeman, in her publication *Paper Tiger* (2010), focus on the thylacine's needless persecution and

exploitation by humans (Owen 33). Freeman in particular focuses on the animal's visual and cultural history. She reminds us of its "Tasmanian Gothic" associations and also the aesthetic entanglement and tensions within contemporary representations of the extinct animal as "the spirit of the place" (Tasmania) (27, 237). "Tasmanian tiger," its common name, is derived from Gothic mythology of dark, violent landscapes and creatures. (Because of this association I avoid the vernacular name "tiger" in my work. I prefer to respect the animal's position as an actual species and its memory as a living animal by using its scientific name *Thylacinus cynocephalus*—thylacine). According to Owen, "it is no coincidence that Tasmania, the island that killed its tiger and has regretted it ever since, has much of its land mass locked away as World Heritage Area and parkland. This makes it one of the world's most protected places. Few would dispute the role of the thylacine in making that come about" (31). Rather ironically, (given its absence and the circumstances of its extinction) Tasmanian advertising still features the "Tassie tiger" as a logo for tourist brochures, local produce and the state's vehicle registration plates. Given the thylacine's natural, cultural and visual history Leigh's novel pricks the local psyche in discomforting ways. But, perhaps the ultimate irony, in terms of the thylacine as a logo for contemporary Tasmania, is that "there is no consistent and reliable relation between the animal depicted and the meanings conveyed or even intended" (Baker qtd. in Freeman 237).

For ecocriticism the most significant omission from its conventional cultural and visual representation is its actual natural history. "Its animality is overlooked. … the causes of the species' extinction are denied or concealed. The animal's history is invisible; the image becomes simply a symbol of something else entirely" (Freeman 238). In Leigh's novel two rival groups utilise the Tassie tiger as their symbol: commercial enterprises focused on environmental resources utilise it "as a priced commodity, … part of the capitalist order" and

the other group, conservationists, read "the tiger [as] a symbol for wilderness" (Crane *Myths of Wilderness* 148).

Recent cloning experiments have added another twist to the thylacine's "natural" history. Moreover, they have increased the credibility of Leigh's narrative with regard to the biotechnology company and its demand for thylacine DNA. *The Hunter* was published in 1999 and in the same year Australian Museum director Mike Archer headed a thylacine DNA revival project which was fraught with practical and ethical problems (Owen 178–85). Possible differences in its social behaviour, if raised in captivity, were central to ethical considerations. Consequently, there was concern regarding safe habitat for its release (safe for itself, humans and wilderness as a whole). Owen insightfully suggests a cloned thylacine "may bear a ghostly resemblance to its mystery-shrouded past" (185). Owen concludes his chapter on cloning with a witty and profound observation by conservationist David Pemberton: "'We don't know the animal's social behaviour so how are we going to recreate it ethically? Or are we just going to make something that behaves another way and call it a tiger? It will be *Thylacinus archerite*'" (185).

Human impact has clearly been a key factor in the thylacine's extinction yet Tasmanian culture clings to its image as a revered symbol of a unique life and identity. Both ethically and aesthetically Leigh's fictional representation goes some way toward reparation of these misrepresentations and neglect.

The Ethics and Aesthetics of Representing Extinction in *The Hunter*

A sense of desolation and loss from anthropogenic exploitation of natural resources is established from the narrative outset of *The Hunter*. This literary aesthetic is in keeping with several of the texts examined so far (*One Hand Clapping*, *Blue Cathedral* and the film version of *The Hunter*). It enables authors to reveal the underbelly of the "pristine" iconic Tasmanian wilderness usually featured in ecotourism brochures and traditional images. Leigh's

representation of ghost towns introduces the tone of loss and absence. M observes the townships from his airport hire-car as he drives into the south-west of the Island. Stores and petrol stations peter out, the road turns to dirt and grazing land is replaced by: "uniform rows of tiny plantation saplings … then come the vacant concrete plots: Welcome to the dead town, once a logging town. Here, people have picked up their houses and moved on. A whole row of demountables has been abandoned, the windows bagged with bright orange plastic" (*TH* 4). The effect of industrial impact is amplified when M observes the neglected property which is to be his base-camp. Once a working farm, the weed-infested paddock sprouts rusting car bodies and discarded tin drums. A dilapidated bluestone house and outbuildings offer weather protection for a long gone-to-seed vegetable patch. Possible contamination from a nearby log dump makes M reluctant to drink from the creek.

Leigh's theme of natural resource exploitation continues but narrows from the wilderness to its native animals as neighbour, Jack Mindy, guides M up to the escarpment, where he will commence his hunt. Narrated historical context indicates the vast numbers of native wallabies, possums and thylacines hunted since white settlement. The plateau, a cornucopia for trappers, yielded more thylacine pelts than anywhere else in Tasmania. Brutal conditions were endured by these men who preferred to hunt in the winter when the animals' fur was thickest: "Hard days, yes but days of plenty" (*TH* 15). In a later reflection M notes that the early trappers themselves now bordered on "extinction," "one or two perhaps whiling away their nursing-home days in a fog of pleasant fantasies" (*TH* 38). He is pleased to be part of what he regards as an aesthetic symmetry (*TH* 38). In startling contrast to contemporary ecocentric sensibilities M finds it comforting that the human hunter is more successful at rendering extinctions than the "sixteen Ice Ages" (*TH* 31).

Throughout the novel there is a notable absence of any kind of Pastoral or Romantic sensibility although there are several "Gothic" moments (nocturnal devils howling in snares

and shock encounters with dead animals) (*TH* 113, 148). Consequently, a very particular experience of the Central Highlands' wilderness and wildlife is expressed through the "split" persona of M. On the one hand there are his "naturalist" observations of the topography: "Beyond the valley is another rocky rise, but also further down, there is a giant T-junction of sorts … Primordial civic planning" (*TH* 30). M's urban analogies superficially synthesise nature and culture. On the other hand, M's predatory behaviour and survival skills, from his experience as a hunter/mercenary, are apparent when he enters the thylacine's lair and transforms into "natural-man." He "sniffs various levels of the air and determines on smell alone that it is clear an animal has used the lair in the recent past" (*TH* 159). Both aspects of his persona inform his emotionally detached point-of-view and clinical dialogue (usually internal monologue). Leigh's own restrained linguistic style reinforces an emotional or metaphysical separation between M and nature. This risks a potentially alienated response from readers also. Landscape descriptions incorporate various native flora and fauna endemic to the area. Amid purple trigger flowers, spongy coral-fern and lichen-covered boulders, Bennett's wallabies, devils and wombats (or their scats) appear like a passing parade. This cast of extras leap, scuttle and strangle in snares beneath a canopy of snow gums framed by dolerite peaks. Empirical versions of the Central Highlands, like Leigh's, could easily be extracted from scientific and historical data to achieve a sense of local authenticity. Scientific curiosity or the trained eye of the botanical artist may be engaged but M's functional view of the landscape (and consequently Leigh's representation) makes little appeal to the human heart.

In keeping with M's point-of-view, wilderness in *The Hunter*, is primarily depicted in terms of weather and navigational landmarks such as lakes, clumps of pines, dolerite ridges and uniquely shaped trees. Evocative, sensual descriptions of the bush based on colour, sound, texture and scents are rare and instrumental rather than simply aesthetic. "The scent of lemon boronia ushered by on a light breeze" (*TH* 82) provides a sensory prelude for M's cognitive

shift to meditation while "the soft fragrant needle carpet" offers him a functional bed (*TH* 89). Emotionally laden words like "exploitation," "destruction" and "humility" are also absent.

The significant questions here are: what is lost and what is gained (in terms of ecological ethics) by Leigh's choice of this emotionally disengaged aesthetic style? As I have argued throughout this thesis an absence of affective components can undermine environmental advocacy by reducing readers' caring response. On the other hand it may be tempting to argue that Leigh's approach is in keeping with ecocentrism which is premised around Darwinian principles of survival rather than sentimental attachment. The tension here dissipates, however, when it is remembered that ecocentrism is about much more than natural selection. Its basic moral tenets of intrinsic value and protection against anthropogenic exploitation of the nonhuman world ultimately override the Darwinian perspective.

M is constructed as an enemy to the environmental movement and his character does not invite reader sympathies. Chauvinism and ruthlessness are edged with moments of vulnerability. Despite undergoing a series of developments M's character, as Andrew Peek suggests, "lacks credibility" and remains an assemblage, of "masculine stereotypes" both traditional and contemporary (31). M's imaginative capacity to undergo an "alchemical change" attunes his senses to the natural world so he "can see and hear and smell what other men cannot; [yet] the man of delicate touch and sinuous movement" remains emotionally and morally detached from the rest of nature (*TH* 58). His corporeal self only is transformed and while this is in accord with biological nature it is not in accord with Western expectations of human nature. A further disturbing tension occurs through Leigh's depiction of M's obsessive devotion to "his beautiful traps" (*TH* 56). Pride in his "handiwork" as he gently lays out the metal "spikes, chains and crushing jaws" of the traps evokes a sense of religious offering for/or sacrifice of his intended victims. Significantly for ecocriticism, a large part of the narrative in *The Hunter* offers little, in terms of environmental advocacy, for those not already intellectually aware and

emotionally engaged with the care and protection of vulnerable species and biodiversity. Rather, Leigh's construction of the Tasmanian wilderness through M's point-of-view tends to reinforce traditional dualism between culture and nature. By superficially representing the wilderness from his perspective of human dominance and as a mere resource Leigh risks rendering it silent.

Why then has Leigh chosen Tasmania's fragile wilderness as a setting to depict the impact of anthropogenic extinction? I suggest her aim was to raise awareness of human impact from a global perspective. By choosing the trope of extinction and the thylacine as a subject (in her narrative timelines) Tasmania became the setting by default rather than through careful selection. Leigh's main interest, is in the global relevance of her narrative rather than in its credibility of representation of the locale and cultures. M, a hired hunter, also serves as metaphor for environmental destruction generally. Without wishing to detract from the plight of the thylacine as an actual and abused species my analysis of *The Hunter* also interprets the animal as a metaphorical representation of extinction and loss of biodiversity locally and globally.

As Wilson, Garrard and Rigby point out anthropogenic extinction can take many forms. The significant threat in *The Hunter* is not the hunter M but the global biotechnology company employing him. Leigh's narrative identifies this accelerating contemporary threat to biodiversity. Globally, in the twenty-first century, specimen collection and subsequent species exploitation for pharmaceuticals, cloning, private zoos and chemical weapons are leading to over-harvesting and extinctions of entire species. Strict regulation and poacher surveillance is required to prevent multi-national biotechnology corporations becoming the "trappers" and "bounty-hunters" of the future. Interestingly in 2003 (just four years after Leigh published *The Hunter*) biotechnologists actually cloned a Pyrenean ibex effectively bringing it back from extinction. Sadly, (and perhaps mercifully) the calf died only seven minutes after birth due to respiratory difficulties but de-extinction has become a new buzz-word for bio-technicians and

palaeontologists (Rincon 1). It has also raised a number of practical issues including ecosystem changes effecting both already existing wildlife and those "returning." Is it possible to recreate suitable ecosystems for extinct animals and "which creatures that have adapted to the new landscape will we sacrifice to do so?" (Fletcher 6). De-extinction advocate Mike Archer, in a conversation about the thylacine, highlights the importance of changing human behaviour and responsibility as the key element in long-term success:

> So, could we put it back? Yes. Is that all we would do? And this is an interesting question. Sometimes, you might be able to put it back, but is that the safest way to make sure it never goes extinct again? And I don't think so.
>
> I think gradually, as we see species all around the world, it's kind of a mantra, that wildlife is increasingly not safe in the wild … we need other parallel strategies. (Fletcher 6)

When Leigh's narrative is re-read, in the context of both general advances in biotechnology and the cloning of extinct animals in particular, her speculative "second chance" increases in relevance and credibility. For other more recently extinct species, at least, de-extinction could become a realistic option. Thus Leigh's narrative raises a vital question for anthropogenic extinctions—as a species will *Homo sapiens* act differently: "If we bring them back before we have halted our current rate of extinction, will we simply be dooming them to a second extinction?" (Fletcher 6). What will make us care more and what will make us act more ethically to avoid past errors?

After establishing an emotionally detached narration, a "laboratory-style wilderness" and an unappealing protagonist how does Leigh make us care? The subtle environmental conversation which she sustains throughout the narrative mirrors mainstream and minor voices in contemporary Western society. M and his mission metaphorically represent destruction and exploitation through corporate need and greed which, many would argue is the dominant socio-

political position in Tasmania and in the contemporary Western world. Significantly the ecocentric perspective in the novel is represented by the two "absent" and thus, relatively voiceless characters—Jarrah Armstrong and the presumed extinct thylacine. By including competing perspectives and reactions, both from minor and "absent" characters and the protagonist, Leigh constructs some balance for reader responses. Tensions are expressed through M's perceived growing attachment to the Armstrong family; the absent character of Jarrah who provides the moral touchstone; the family tragedy and M's subsequent grief (and reader grief); M's apparent "bonding" with the thylacine; its vulnerable state and finally its death, not only as an individual but as the end of its species. I explore each of these elements in turn.

Initially M is unimpressed by the slovenly condition of the Armstrong house and the feral children who seemed to be running it. Irritated by the girl's chatter he wonders why she talks to him and suspects it is just to gather information: "They were spies, children, little murderers" (*TH* 7). Realising the children's mother, Lucy, is virtually confined to bed, M decides to look for another place. The local pub forestry workers ostracise him as a "greenie" and the publican refuses him accommodation. Determined then to make the most of the Armstrong situation he transforms the house into a clean, orderly and functional base-camp. M is both a beneficiary and a victim of military training. Resourceful, self-reliant and highly disciplined this "robotic" persona struggles with, and ultimately suffocates, his humanity. Tension here is not just within M's character but spills over into the narrative itself which directs reader sympathies into an alternating pattern of hope and disappointment. Until the last few pages of *The Hunter* readers are encouraged, through a series of tender family moments and M's perceived developing empathy, to hope for both M's moral redemption and the thylacine's escape.

In his search for the thylacine M makes several trips to the escarpment and during his returns to the homestead a relationship of "strange intimacy" develops first with the children and then with the occasionally lucid mother (*TH* 71). Effectively objectifying them M refers to Sass as "the girl" and to Lucy as "Sleeping Beauty" (*TH* 72). Keeping them at an emotional distance while sharing domestic tasks, like making dinner, adds another level of tension to the relationship drama. In addition, M calculatingly resists seducing Lucy deciding to "save her" for after his mission, as a "treat" similar to his buried coffee (his reward to himself after he kills the thylacine). His attitude to the children is also primarily motivated by self-interest. On one occasion, when he discovers Bike has followed him up to the escarpment, he slaps him. Bike becomes hysterical and begins to hyperventilate. In order to calm him down M holds the boy close to him but as soon as the child is quiet M pulls away. His actions are ambivalent. "He'll have to take the boy back. He doesn't want to, but it would distract him to know the boy is wandering around" (*TH* 111). Is his concern primarily for Bike's welfare or more that the boy will jeopardise the success of M's mission? Nevertheless, as the story progresses M does develop a self-serving kind of affection for the family. M's first attempt to hunt the thylacine fails and he is recalled to Sydney by his employer. Lucy says she will miss him and M too, realises he will "miss her, will miss them, and this feeling doesn't leave him as he drives away" (*TH* 128).

Reader expectations are manipulated by Leigh to suggest that family love may soften M's character and inspire his empathy for the elusive thylacine. Two months later, as he drives back to the Armstrong house M is anticipating the reunion "like a boy going on a first date" (*TH* 131). He fantasises about growing old on a farm with loved ones around him. Suddenly, no longer as sure of himself M is preparing for initial rejection or later disappointment. This point in the narrative, when he returns, is the beginning of Part Two and M appears "humanised"

to some degree as Leigh reveals aspects of his vulnerability. In turn this encourages further hope for his redemption and also for his prey's survival.

As narrative counterpart to M's exploitation and destruction Jarrah Armstrong, the absent (presumed dead) father and environmental hero, serves as a shadow figure and a "moral touchstone" against which human activity is implicitly judged. Jarrah's name has connections with the natural world—unique to Western Australia, it is one of the hardest timbers available, resistant to termites and fire. An intellectual, also covertly looking for the thylacine, Jarrah's ethical position is voiced by Lucy and his children during conversations with M. The title of Jarrah's work-in-progress, *Bioethics for Another Millennium* also reinforces his politics. Shakti, one of the hippie visitors to the Armstrong house is dismissed by M when she reads from Jarrah's book: "At a time when the planet is overrun with man, is it really so unfeasible to question whose life is more …" (*TH* 108).

M finds human bones on the plateau and he believes they are Jarrah's remains. Despite the anguish of Lucy and the children, who are waiting for any news of his discovery, M covers the skeletal parts more thoroughly, marks the spot on his map and plans to return: "Later, he thinks, I will come back and collect him. Later, when the job is done" (*TH* 115). Jarrah is not mainstream, he is not local and his ghost influence in the novel is neither detailed nor strong. Within the context of a capitalist driven society Jarrah functions realistically as a minority voice of environmental advocacy. Yet, his character adds a significant voice to the dialogical perspective of the novel by presenting readers with another way to relate to the natural world beyond exploiting its resources. In this way Leigh uses him as a counterpoint to M's attitude to wilderness and biodiversity. M and Jarrah, both educated, Western men, serve as extreme points of the moral dichotomy of anthropogenic extinction while the "chorus" of other characters, fit somewhere within the spectrum.

The Armstrong family tragedy begins with the loss of Jarrah but there is more suffering and this time M is emotionally involved. On his return from Sydney the bluestone house is in darkness and silent. Entering through a window he realises the house is half empty, derelict and he notices part of the main room has been burnt. Back in town the pub owner tells him the Armstrongs have "'Cleared out.'" (*TH* 135). Leigh imaginatively associates M's physical and primal grief response with traits of the thylacine: "his chest scooped out. His skin has been peeled from his body. He can dislocate his jaw and fill the universe with a stone-grey roar" (*TH* 135). Jack Mindy's wife tells him about the fire, and its consequences. Sass is hospitalised on the mainland with critical burns, Lucy has had a complete breakdown and is institutionalised near her daughter and Bike is in local foster-care. M returns to the abandoned house and after a Rohypnol induced sleep he once again climbs to the escarpment. His thwarted plan to usurp Jarrah's vacant position in the family results in anguish and self-pity. He tries to rationalise and diminish his grief as he picks his way through the tree roots and boulders:

> I have been forsaken, he thinks, the world conspires against me. I try, I try, and look what happens. I did not ask for much, … He listens to himself: it is disgusting, to feel so sorry for oneself. The whole thing is disgusting; he doesn't want to know about it. Worse things, he thinks, can happen. But can they? Can they really? Even the solace he offers himself is barren. (*TH* 141)

At this point in Leigh's narrative reader sympathies are secured for Lucy and her children but also for M's personal loss, particularly given his apparent emotional growth into a more empathetic (and thus endearing) man. M's self-pity prevails but some empathy is apparent: "At night, lying on the hard ground, he is plagued by thoughts of the girl, Sass, now condemned to lying down, and of her mother, who knows no better" (*TH* 142). Again, readers can expect, at least, a potential change-of-heart from the hunter towards his prey but this is not fulfilled. He checks his "creations" (traps and snares) in the hope of finding a thylacine "or what is left of

the tiger after the devils have done with it—stripped it of meat and bone, leaving behind only the trapped leg, or perhaps a scrap of skin. Who cares?" (*TH* 143). The element of indifference: "Who cares?" suggests M's passion for the hunt is flagging but this is more likely due to an overall depressive state (*TH* 143). He doesn't set any new snares but when his food runs out he is reluctant to leave the wilderness. He adapts to an ascetic existence:

> In those weeks of doing little more than finding food and shelter, of breathing and pumping blood and watching the clouds form and fade, the melancholia deep inside him—the bucolia—works its way to the surface like a bullet or splinter being slowly expelled from a wound. He comes to think of his fondness for Lucy and the children as an aberration, a monumental lapse in judgement. (*TH* 147)

Interestingly, the conceptual modification from "melancholia" to "bucolia" signals the superficial level of his grief. "Bucolia," derived from bucolic, meaning "of shepherds, pastoral; rustic, rural." (bucolic, def. adj.) suggests a sorrow born of a lost pastoral, idyllic, or nostalgic scenario—the equivalent of M's "grow[ing] old on a farm, with loved ones around" (*TH* 132). Selfish disappointment is at the centre of his sadness rather than any deep concern for the suffering of Lucy, Sass and Bike. Moreover, M shows no further interest in the welfare of the weakened females although later in the narrative he remembers Bike with some concern: "Where does *he* sleep? Does he lie awake at night in a strange room, with a poster on the wall that he doesn't like, and wait open-eyed for dawn?" (*TH* 152). M survives for weeks on the plateau. But, he has changed although not in the way readers might expect or hope. He reverts to his earlier detached self, into a state of remarkable clarity believing he has "been tested, steeled, and seduced, and that his true purpose is the one which he first set out to achieve: to be a hunter, to harvest the tiger" (*TH* 148).

As Leigh moves to the final stage of the narrative, the hunt and death of the thylacine, M's relationship with the nonhuman world is increasingly governed by his natural-man persona.

Weeks pass and he adapts to living alone in the wilderness. Like the native animals, M drinks from the creeks and sleeps in the undergrowth. "To reacquaint himself with the tiger he gets down on his knees and crawls along an open pad with his jaw dropped wide until his rough palms begin to smart" (*TH* 148). Yet, as Crane points out, his high-tech equipment also separates him bodily from the environment and this results in an unsettling character contradiction (*Myths of Wilderness* 154). Paradoxically technology brings him closer to and distances him from the nonhuman.

Throughout *The Hunter* Leigh portrays human/nonhuman relationships as complicated. "Characters are never boxed into simplistic categories of good and evil," as Borrell notes, and two of Leigh's "greenies" epitomise the moral complexity associated with animal conservation (61). Tall and Small are now employed by the National Parks to find the thylacine. M observes them as he would any prey, while they are oblivious to his presence. Armed with a tranquilliser gun the boys are not intent on extermination but exploitation of the thylacine by selling its photograph. If he can first capture some good images Tall vows he would let it go: "'I'd hold it by the muzzle and point its nose dead west and tell the poor thing to run like the wind'" (*TH* 155). The greenies sentimental motivation to let the thylacine escape, however, does not equate with ethical action for its care and protection. As Borrell points out "the desperate lack of any effective conservation measures works as an urgent call for action" (62). If we recall Sophie's more eco-progressive position in *The World Beneath*, for example, she tries to convince her father to destroy what he thinks is a photo of a thylacine in order to avoid the environmental destruction associated with tourists, scientists, filmmakers and profit-driven enterprises as they invade the wilderness to find it. It could be argued that Sophie's approach is one of conservation because it allows the animal a chance to flourish in its natural habitat whereas despite Tall and Small letting it escape if they publicise its photograph they are precipitating its "second" extinction.

Avoiding the boys and any other National Parks crew M patiently tracks the thylacine to her lair. Inside the lair he finds only the bones of a thylacine pup which: "He touches … as he would the Holy Grail or his own first child" (*TH* 159). The pup's remains are too old to be the offspring of a living thylacine and thus suggest the lair has sheltered generations of thylacine families. M makes a bed for himself from wallaby skins and lies beside the tiny skeleton to wait. Time slows, storms pass, wildflowers bloom, M's beard curls and grows but still he waits, curled up in the lair. His behaviour now mirrors that of a mate and such affinity suggests developing compassion. His material immersion into the thylacine's way of life, dissolves the last traces of alienation between man and beast. In terms of the narrative drama this is the perfect moment for the thylacine to finally appear. Emerging from sleep M "realises that he is hearing something—a rustling outside, movement" and he catches sight of her (*TH* 161). Lying in the sun with her nose buried in the remains of a wallaby she is unable to smell her predator:

> What he is seeing is both beautiful and terrible at the same time, and he watches with the same rapt attention he would devote to a film which told the story of his own life, past and future. …
>
> He shoots as soon as she starts to leap and the first bullet catches her mid-air. The second and third bullets, fired in quick succession, bring her to the ground.
>
> And that is it. (*TH* 162–63)

Instead of the anticipated reprieve for the vulnerable creature Leigh subverts reader expectations. The thylacine doesn't die instantly: "drawing close he can hear her wheezing, see her shudder intermittently" (*TH* 163). Mesmerised by her actual presence M prolongs her suffering while he admires the detail of her dying body—her vacant eyes, her coated teeth and gums and the whitish-brown hair on her face. Then he shoots her in the head. At this point in the narrative Leigh allows M (to allow himself) a moment of remorse:

> Kneeling down, he rests his hand against the fine creamy fur that shields her bony chest—nothing. She is more than an animal to him, more than a wallaby or pademelon, and he observes her body as he would the body of a friend laid out in the morgue … it feels so wrong. …There is an impassable, unimaginable gulf between life and death, so that even life at its lowest ebb, lying ill or morose, barely moving, such life is utterly vibrant when compared to death. Now, her stillness is obscene. (*TH* 164)

Leigh's representation of the thylacine's actual death (and extinction) in *The Hunter* echoes Quammen's evocative vignette of the dodo's passing. While Leigh avoids sentimental language the dominant naturalistic narrative is interposed with M's fleeting remorse: "It feels so wrong. … Now, her stillness is obscene" (*TH* 164). Similarly, Quammen disrupts his naturalist observations to include a very moving (often-quoted) fictional scenario of the dodo's last hours. Nearly blind and in failing health she shelters from a storm: "She drew her head down against her body, fluffed her feathers for warmth, squinted in patient misery. She waited. She didn't know it, nor did anyone else, but she was the only dodo on Earth. When the storm passed, she never opened her eyes. This is extinction" (*TH* 275). Like Quammen Leigh's death scene utilises pathos to affectively engage readers with the natural history of extinction.

Consistent with his character M suppresses any further grief. With his surgical kit he dissects the thylacine's body to harvest the requisite genetic material. Narrative tension increases as M's sample collection method reveals both forensic and ritualistic elements: "[he] shaves an envelope-sized patch above the femoral vein; he does this carefully, like a mother tenderly brushing the hair of a murder victim" (*TH* 165). Eventually, with the relish of a serial killer ("obstetrics, which is more his style") he harvests her reproductive organs (*TH* 166). The ovaries and uterus are placed in a custom-built vial of liquid nitrogen and stored in his backpack. "Still wearing his rubber gloves he moves his pack away from the carcass (when it became a carcass he isn't sure)" (*TH* 166). He cremates her remains and as the pyre ignites so does his

sense of achievement. Later he buries the bones deep in the earth. The job is done and as a reward he allows himself to revel in his victory.

The implicit question of how the thylacine samples are used by the biotechnology corporation remains a mystery in Leigh's novel. M is not troubled regarding good or evil consequences from his mission but insightful readers would notice that the company itself operates covertly and its identity remains obscure (in the film it is *Redleaf*). M meets Tall and Small on his way back and they talk about the family tragedy. "Mention of the Armstrongs is now as foreign to M as mention of another planet; he knows it exists, that it has subtle but powerful effects, that it is very far away" (*TH* 169). Declining a cup of tea, he tells the boys he has a long way to go before dark. Thankful that the precious results of his mission remained undetected, M hurries off to retrieve his other secret treasure—"his sweet warm hidden coffee" (*TH* 170).

Perhaps the most disturbing anomaly in M's character is that his physical and instinctual adaptability allow him to merge effectively with the nonhuman world but only in a predatory rather than protective way. In the bush "he and his pack move as one" and when he needs to sleep he shuffles under a tree fern (*TH* 14). Alchemical change is motivated by his needs as a hunter. Through a shamanistic kind of transformation his naturalist personae becomes natural-man whose senses are highly attuned to the wilderness sounds, sights and scents. When he occupies the thylacine's lair, waiting weeks for her inevitable return, he thinks, "I could be quite comfortable here" (*TH* 160). M's corporeal merging with the nonhuman world serves to dissolve some of the initial nature/culture dualism but it also creates a disturbing tension. Garrard notes that "one of Leigh's major achievements is to associate believably the rhetoric of closeness to nature with … a morally bankrupt individual" (*Ecocriticism* 178). Despite being close to nature physically M does not develop any higher level of eco-ethical consciousness. While this absence of ecological ethics may be logically consistent in Darwinian terms, (or in

the lives of the early trappers) it subverts contemporary human social norms and expectations in the developed Western world. M suppresses his compassion and morality in order to become natural man but self-preservation is part of a much bigger picture for the human animal's evolution (*TH* 58). M's physical immersion in the nonhuman world suggests a sense of kinship but M does not develop ecological concern. This seeming contradiction, which is potentially problematic for theories of affect and shared materiality, is undermined, to some degree, by the non-typical human, M, which Leigh creates (discussed below).

For most of the narrative Leigh maintains competing tensions between the protagonist's development and the outcome of the story. She keeps readers guessing in an alternating pattern of will he or won't he (M) become a better person, and will it or won't it (the thylacine) escape and live on. Hopes of redemption for M and the thylacine's fate are raised and dashed until the climactic confrontation between man and beast. Given M's adaption to the wilderness environment, the personal grief/disappointment he has endured and his imaginative projections as the thylacine's "mate," or the thylacine herself, it is reasonable to expect a morally uplifting ending. Instead the denouement and resolution is rapid, shocking and dystopian. The tragedy operates on several interacting levels which can be unpicked to form three significant questions which assist in realising the full impact of Leigh's narrative. First, can the behaviour of the individual protagonist be considered representative of humankind generally? Second, what are the implications for species extinction locally and globally? Finally, how do these outcomes resonate in terms of the overall relationship between humans and the rest of the natural world for the future?

M is presented as a kind of super-human, almost biologically engineered in terms of his physical endurance, his cognitive skills and his ability to disassociate emotionally. Consequently, he is not typical when measured against the hypothetical reasonable person (that is, the man on the Clapham omnibus used as a benchmark in British law). Tony Hughes D'Aeth

decides that M is not a "'character', within the humanist precepts of this idea, but an agent. This is an idea which Leigh enjoys playing with" (Hughes-d'Aeth 24). It is reasonable to expect, then, that other individuals, more typical, average or ordinary may act differently. Does it necessarily follow that they would care more? If so it could be argued that concern paves the way for compassion, sentimentality and empathy to influence behaviour. With respect to *The Hunter's* representation of anthropogenic extinction, by logical extension these affective components would allow for the thylacine's reprieve. Leigh's protagonist M has countless opportunities to reform but remains true to his mission and thus is irredeemable. M, as I have established, is not a typical local or global citizen and ostensibly this offers some hope for humankind generally.

Optimism derived from M's non-typical character is rapidly extinguished, however, when we consider actual anthropogenic extinctions in the "enlightened" twenty-first century (see Wilson and Rigby in the introduction). Although M is not typical of humans in his moral behaviour why does it not follow that extinctions of species (and environmental impact overall) is decreasing rather than increasing through human impact? I suggest two reasons grounded in prevailing cultural attitudes of advanced global societies. Underpinning my overall thesis argument these reasons are—humanity's loss of kinship with the rest of nature and a prevailing mind-set that animals and (nature overall) are primarily a resource for human exploitation. Human impulses for power (especially from government and exploitative industries and enterprises), metaphorically represented by global corporations like M's biotechnology employer, exacerbate separations from and dominations of wilderness. Minor characters in Leigh's novel (and in actual life), represented by co-dependent forestry workers and Parks and Wildlife recruits, are relatively powerless players in a much bigger game. These relationships of power and co-dependence are the analytical focus of the previous chapter which explores representations of "harnessing nature" in Tasmania.

Initially Leigh's aesthetics, in terms of detached point-of-view and naturalistic language coupled with the narrative outcome, appears to offer little hope for change. By creating an imaginary "second chance" Leigh recreates the shame of the thylacine's extinction and of anthropogenic extinction generally. (There is an anomaly here because the fictional thylacine is "believed" to be the last one, so is necessarily extinct because she is unable to breed. But the myths and credible sightings maintain a degree of "hope" as does the thylacine herself as instinctively "she greets each day as a new opportunity to track the scent of a mate" (*TH* 66)). Not perpetrated for relatively basic needs like those of the early trappers and pastoralists, M's killing of the thylacine is a conscious extinction carried out to fulfil individual and corporate impulses for power. The degrees of difference range from pest eradication or local bounties coupled with little knowledge of the importance of biodiversity, to conscious extermination of an entire species in the context of twenty-first-century ecological knowledge. Greater culpability for the act is implied. Leigh's imagined "second chance" scenario, when applied to the global biotechnology company rather than just the non-typical individual agent "M," suggests humanity has learned nothing from knowledge of previous extinctions. This is likely to shock or at least disturb readers who anticipate a more optimistic ending.

The Ethical Implications of Dystopian and Utopian Endings

Critical opinion is divided regarding the different moral implications between the novel and film ending. In the film adaptation of *The Hunter* (analysed in Chapter Eight) director Daniel Nettheim significantly alters the character of M to allow for a credible optimistic ending. Nettheim depicts the relationship between M and Lucy as an evolving love story which expands to include a genuine developing emotional attachment with her children. In turn family intimacy sublimates into compassion for his prey. While M still kills the thylacine in the film it is depicted as an act of mercy to save the creature from further persecution and the environment from further degradation. The conclusion for humanity generally is more

optimistic, suggesting eco-ethical progress. Popular with audiences Nettheim's ending blunts the shock of Leigh's relentlessly bleak outcome (making for a more commercially successful film).

In contrast, ecocritics and animal studies critics regard Leigh's original tragic ending as vital for representing the issue of anthropogenic extinctions. Borrell and Freeman also express concern about displaced grief whereby M's compassion for the thylacine (in the film) is really a cathartic reaction for his repressed grief about the Armstrongs. In this way "these factors create an ethical ambiguity that undercuts the idea of his redemption" (Freeman 7). In addition, readers also could be emotionally "primed" by the human family tragedy and this could result in an emotionally and ethically conflated response to the thylacine extinction. On the other hand, an intensified sorrow by the double tragedy, seemingly focussed on the fictional thylacine extinction could serve ecological ethics well. Borrell and Freeman also point out that, "There is now little shock, but a standard film ending in which a general audience can safely identify with the main character: he becomes a hero, saving the thylacine from exploitation. Also by extension, he is potentially saving the world from the effects of the particular kind of bio-warfare" (6). Borrell and Freeman encapsulate the moral dilemma resulting from Leigh's and Nettheim's different narrative outcomes: "the challenge then, is maintaining balance between retaining an uplifting and therefore motivating tone, while emphasising the need for continued efforts to save species on the brink" (9).

Leigh's bleak conclusion delivers a more intense emotional impact than the film version. It more effectively conveys the *gravitas* of avoidable extinctions knowingly caused by humans. Some anthropogenic extinctions, like those exacerbated by early trappers, were not completely understood, morally and ecologically, until it was too late. In the case of Leigh's protagonist, however, M knew and understood the ecological impact and moral consequences but acted anyway. The more optimistic film ending dilutes the eco-ethical impact with respect to both

needless animal deaths and the impact on biodiversity. It undermines the finality of the death of one creature and by extension the vast absence created by extinction of an entire species. Scott Brewer pinpoints the position and notes the difficulties and potential in representing loss through extinction. Brewer argues that Leigh's ending "enables a sobering and frightening contact with irrevocable environmental destruction" (10). If we recall Wilson and Rigby's findings (from the chapter introduction) Leigh's fictional representation of anthropogenic extinction is suitably bleak.

The issues raised by Leigh's representation of thylacine extinction are relevant to the current situation of other species. In. Australia now the *Canus lupus dingo*, commonly known as dingo, is experiencing a similar misrepresentation and persecution to that experienced by Tasmania's thylacine almost a century ago. Considered an "enemy" of the pastoralists, in parts of Australia dead dingos are displayed hanging from trees as hunters' trophies and, absurdly, as "warnings" to other dingos (Rose 92–93). (This practice has it counterpart in "idyllic" rural England where rows of dead moles swing from lines between fencing posts.) The dingo's "extinction is actively being sought by some segments of society" while others pursue regulation to conserve existing dingo populations (Rose 1). Deborah Bird-Rose believes: "the current extinction crisis is an Earth-shattering disaster, one that cannot be unmade, and in the sense cannot be mended, but yet one toward which we owe an ethical response that includes turning toward others in the hopes of mending at least some of the damage" (5). The dingo's vulnerability echoes the history of the thylacine in many ways. Rose suggests: "dingo deaths" [like thylacines] "are one ripple in the larger pattern of destruction that calls us to ask: is eco-reconciliation nothing more than a wild and crazy dream?" (69). The overwhelming tragedy in *The Hunter* is not just anthropogenic extinction (including the prospect of *Homo sapiens* rendering our own species extinct) but our loss of an ecological sense of kinship. In the novel M's imaginative capacity to "become" thylacine is cultivated to facilitate his hunting and is not

generated by any protective, affective or ethical motivations. Again, normative expectations for human behaviour transcend those expected by Darwinian theory. Evolving consciousness has separated us from the rest of nature in many ways but our scientific and moral development allows us to recognise our primal connections and our current destructive path. Yet, Leigh's narrative conclusion is a realistic representation of prevailing relationships between humans and nonhuman species and also an effective metaphor to represent anthropogenic destruction of wilderness generally.

While noting that ecotopian ideals are valued differently, according to cultures and individuals, Rigby believes that both dystopian and utopian scenarios and endings can be inspiring for eco-social change ("Imagining Catastrophe" 57, 69). Rigby links our capacity to *imagine* with our capacity to *act* in the present (my italics) ("Imagining Catastrophe" 69). In the context of her analysis of Nevil Shute's 1957 *On the Beach* Rigby points out that dystopian visions can function as warnings and could assist in prefiguring better or worse ways to respond to disasters like extinction and climate change. "Dystopian visions, even of a drastically apocalyptic variety, can indeed function as a warning that energizes endeavours to prevent the realization of the negative future that they prefigure. In this, they perform a prophetic function …" ("Imagining Catastrophe" 69). Rigby also proposes "a reinterpretation of utopia, not as a place but as a path, a good path, to an unforeseeable future" ("Imagining Catastrophe" 73). The "path" is based on; adaptability, a move to non-resource intensive pleasurable activities and a reconnection with the natural world to restore a sense of kinship ("Imagining Catastrophe" 73–75). Ultimately she stresses the importance of facing up to reality but also to not lose heart ("Imagining Catastrophe" 72).

Writers, artists and ecocritics, in their role as activists, reveal issues of environmental concern but also explore areas of hope for future generations. An element of relief from Leigh's dystopian narrative outcome is available if we factor in her aesthetic mode of representation.

Readers need not submit to Leigh's dismal fictional conclusion if *The Hunter* is interpreted primarily as a work of "prophetic imagination." As the "prophet" (in terms of a secular advocate) Leigh is "weeping," not just for one thylacine, or for the extinction of one species or several species. She is "weeping" for humanity's destructive relationship with the nonhuman world. The shock ending in *The Hunter* is designed to inspire behavioural change before it is too late. Destruction of the last thylacine, in Leigh's novel, "incites lamentation in order to engender transformation in the real world" (Rigby "Anthropocene" 4). Leigh's "second chance," however, *imagines* just one scenario for just one species. More optimistic *actual* examples include the campaign to save the endangered Tasmanian devil from extinction. An estimated 90 per cent of the wild devil population has been wiped out by the infectious devil facial tumour disease but in 2015 researchers made significant progress on a potential vaccine.[46] Furthermore, in 2013 a small population of Night Parrots, presumed to be extinct for over a century, were found on a property in Queensland (S. Murphy 2). In addition, rapid advances in controversial "de-extinction" programs hasten the need for new sensibilities on a local and global scale. Ultimately Leigh is suggesting that anthropogenic extinctions, ecologically (and metaphorically) represented by the Tasmanian thylacine, and wilderness destruction generally, need not be sustained—it is up to us.

Leigh's conversation is in accord with most of the other works of fiction selected for this thesis—they encourage ecocentrism through various aesthetic representations created to engage hearts and minds. Whatever wilderness, and to a large extent, species, that remain in the future will result from human choices. In terms of the thylacine, enduring local mythology, credible sightings and now Leigh's story linger in the memory. Gazing onto the misty Florentine Valley, from Tiger Lookout or driving along the dense edges of the Tarkine forest

[46] See "Tasmanian Devil Facial Tumour" transcript (ABC News)

many of us still watch the shadows hoping that "somewhere, out there … [a] tiger stands with her back to the rising wind and slowly shakes herself awake" (*TH* 33). Leigh's prophetic scenario in *The Hunter* is dystopian, but because it is fiction, significant change in actual human behaviour, like the thylacine's survival, is possible—elusive, not probable but possible.

CHAPTER EIGHT:

Recasting the Monster: an EcoGothic Reading of *The Hunter*, a film directed by Daniel Nettheim

"No longer is nature the threatening monster but rather increasingly human beings are seen as monstrous and as a threat to nature" (Smith and Hughes 88)

In this final chapter I present an ecoGothic reading of Daniel Nettheim's film version of *The Hunter* to demonstrate how conventional Gothic discourse can be reversed to highlight the fragility of wilderness ecology and the human potential for destruction. Despite evidence of a shift towards more eco-progressive representation, in the twenty-first century the Gothic aesthetic is still embedded in ideas and stereotypes of the relationship between Tasmanian society and its wilderness regions. As Chapter Two showed, contemporary ethical implications occur from this peculiarly "Tasmanian Gothic" perspective as it interacts with representations of anthropogenic impact on Tasmanian wilderness. Historically, as my analysis of all the selected texts has revealed, the human relationship with nature (both global and local) has involved complex emotions and desires; often fear and a need for control. Negative portrayals of nature, (typical for conventional Gothic expression) reflect and shape this fear. Such eco-regressive interpretations can be re-read ecocritically by reversing this position to highlight the destructive impact of human activity on the rest of the natural world. In turn a pathway for transforming attitudes and behaviour allows for more optimistic scenarios.

The conventional "Tasmanian Gothic" aesthetic, which dominates *Ruby Rose*, is residual in *The Hunter* as the film explores anthropogenic extinctions, and showcases Tasmania's wilderness, in ways which clearly market its eco- tourism potential. Released in 2011 the film is adapted from Leigh's 1999 novel of the same title. Directed by Daniel Nettheim, produced by Porchlight's Vincent Sheehan and written for screen by Alice Addison, *The Hunter* was shot entirely in Tasmania by cinematographer Robert Humphreys.

Numerous newspaper and magazine reviews of *The Hunter* film have been published, most of which unsurprisingly focus on plot and relationship drama. Stephen Holden from *New York Times* is one of few reviewers who highlight the film's underlying environmental themes. He observes that "the hunter-prey contest is insignificant compared with the film's allegorical contemplation of opposing forces: the promises and illusions of technology, survival versus conservation, the meaning of extinction in the age of cloning and, ultimately, the mystery of the past versus the uncertainty of the future" (Holden). Rjurik Davidson, reviewing for *Metro Magazine*, also notes several of the metaphorical and allegorical links around the melancholy of loss frequently associated with representations of Tasmanian landscape. He metaphorically links the dispossession of the Indigenous people and the loss of old-growth forests with the anthropogenic extinction of the thylacine and he concludes that "by the film's end, we can't help but think about what the thylacine's fate tells us about ourselves" (R. Davidson 33).

In contrast to Leigh's novel, to date, Sally Borrell, Carol Freeman and Jane Stadler still lead the scant critical scholarship of the film. The approach to the film and novel adopted by Borrell and Freeman is primarily one of ethics, as they examine representations of animal rights and the impact of globalisation. I refer to their research in the previous chapter on Leigh's novel. Stadler, on the other hand, is more focussed on the aesthetic elements of *The Hunter* film. She notes the change in critical focus, from Gothic symbolism to environmental perspectives, but she points out that these "apparently disjunctive modes are frequently entangled" ("Seeing with Green Eyes" 1). She also observes that "an affective experience of the sublime potentially awaken[s] ecological forms of perception" and can serve as environmental advocacy ("Seeing with Green Eyes" 15).

Tasmanian wilderness, as I have argued, resists neat categories of aesthetic representation. Gothic or Romantic representations of the sublime, in my chosen texts, are frequently disrupted by "toxic sublime" depictions of extraction industry exploitation,

anthropogenic extinctions, biodiversity loss and climate change effects. Tasmania's multi-layered history and topography create challenges for representation which at times are captured genuinely only by a fractured aesthetic. "Ambivalence," a key term in Gothic criticism, frequently characterises both historical and contemporary visual and literary representations of Tasmanian landscape. The coexistence of opposing attitudes, conflicting ethics and ideology, often manifested in and between consumerism and environmental sustainability and climate change anxiety, lead to a state of disharmony and/or disconnect. Fractured images representing crises, unfolding environmental disasters and dystopian outcomes generally, persist in representations of Tasmanian wilderness through Gothic tropes.

In *EcoGothic* (2013), "the first [volume] to explore the Gothic through theories of ecocriticism" Andrew Smith and William Hughes discuss how a Gothic "representation of 'evil' can be used for radical or reactionary ends" (1–2). Wilderness, historically perceived as a "monster" in terms of its physical and psychological threat, to colonisers in particular, when read ecoGothically becomes a victim of the monstrous exploitation resulting from human industries and enterprises. This is not an entirely new perspective as Mary Shelley's Gothic novel *Frankenstein*, set in the Arctic landscape, is frequently imaginatively linked with the failed Franklin Expedition, which "turned into a national disaster, as rescue expeditions could find no trace of survivors" (Lanone 29).[47] Although navigational errors resulted in the ships become trapped in ice, as recently as 1984 forensic analysis revealed that the newly invented canned food, supplied to the sailors on the expedition, probably contributed to their deaths

[47] In 1845 Sir John Franklin led an expedition of two ships, the *Erebus* and the *Terror*, to chart the Northwest Passage. All 129 people died and for many years they were lost without trace. Recent forensics and salvages reveal that a multitude of human errors were largely responsible for the failure of the expedition rather than merely the hostile environment.

through lead poisoning (Lanone 30–31). Catherine Lanone argues that "against all expectations, the fate of the 1845 Franklin expedition came to confirm that technological progress can lead to dehumanizing regression" (30). This example shifts some of the responsibility for the Franklin disaster from traditional Gothic nature to hazards originating in imperialism and hubris. Thus, contemporary reframing of the human as ecoGothic monster threatening the environment through consumerism, pollution and global warming can be viewed as a logical progression in terms of Gothic symbolism.

Various forms of Gothic "monsters" are identified in my analysis of *The Hunter*. David Punter and Glennis Byron identify "the Latin roots of 'monster': as 'monstrare: to demonstrate' and 'monere: to warn'. They explain: 'From classical times through to the Renaissance, monsters were interpreted either as signs of divine anger or as portents of impending disasters'" (qtd. in Tyburski 151). Monsters are also creatures (or metaphors) that arouse feelings of ambivalence because they can serve as prophetic warnings, which if followed, may prevent disasters. I explore this notion below (and also in Chapter Four, the analysis of *The River Wife*). I link the idea of coexisting, frequently opposing forces within monsters, to Rigby's discussion of prophecy (outlined in the Introduction): "The prophet speaks with the voice of grief; but also explicitly or implicitly of hope" and thus dystopian scenarios can create a pathway for those which are more optimistic. ("Anthropocene" 4). "Monsters" may represent the threats posed by nature generally and the wilderness specifically, as in conventional Gothic aesthetics, but in twenty-first-century Western society, I argue, they provide a more effective metaphor for human destruction.

Differences between the novel and the film in terms of plot, characterisation and wilderness representation, mean that monsters and the monstrous can be read ecoGothically in both texts, but with degrees of difference. Nettheim makes some significant changes to the film plot; the unknown biotechnology that employs M is given the identity of Redleaf, a Sydney

based multinational corporation; M's superficial attachment with his host family, the Armstrongs, is depicted as more meaningful as he gradually fills the gap left by the absent father and husband; M does not fulfil his mission for Redleaf to deliver the thylacine DNA. One of the outcomes of these plot revisions is that M becomes less of a monster while the powerful global corporation, Redleaf's "monstrous" activities emerge more clearly. Nettheim believed the unsatisfying ending in Leigh's novel would not make for a commercially successful film. Consequently, the film version of *The Hunter* indulges popular taste and M is "humanised" and eventually develops compassion for the vulnerable thylacine (It is inferred M's emotional growth has occurred through his time with the Armstrong family and his subsequent grief at losing this attachment but also through a developing appreciation of the unique wilderness ecology). The film portrays the "murder" of the thylacine by M as "mercy-killing" to save her and the fragile wilderness habitat from persecution by hunters and tourists. This different moral outcome for M is controversial for both general audiences and critics. (Ethical implications from this revised and now redemptive ending constituted a significant part of my analysis of the novel in Chapter Seven.)

Driven by a variety of practical and marketing constraints, the film also has more externalised drama and relationship tensions than the novel. These aspects were designed to compensate for the less adaptable elements of the written text, such as M's inner conflict, which does not translate easily to screen. Actions drive the narrative as screenwriter Addison allows the visuals to **s**how the story. Nettheim and Sheehan agreed to have minimal dialogue from the main characters—M as a quiet observer, the child Bike as a mute and Lucy as comatose for much of the film (DVD Extras). This restraint in dialogue is reflected in the long external silences in the film (as opposed to interior monologue in the novel) during M's solitary excursions in the wilderness. In many of these external scenes it is the wilderness itself, in all its "moods" which is given the leading role. Silences heighten Gothic tension but they also

encourage audiences to focus on natural sounds and other sensual stimuli to fully interpret the visuals. In this way the audience becomes a focused observer of the wilderness landscape.

Bleak weather, isolation and predatory violence form only part of the visual images of the wilderness in the film. Nettheim's preference was for dull, misty conditions and he made good use of randomly occurring storm clouds and snow. Conventional Gothic tropes, however, are generally avoided and the wilderness is represented essentially through a naturalistic aesthetic interspersed with occasional Classical and Romantic elements. When Gothic effects occur they usually reinforce destructive human activities rather than an adverse portrayal of the environment or its wildlife. However, "the shift in representational practices is more entangled and thus complex than a movement from Gothic villain to ecological victim" (Stadler "Seeing with Green Eyes" 15). This is particularly apparent in *The Hunter* as I explore the role of environmental prophecy, sometimes delivered through characters which I interpret as eco-monsters.

Changing seasons and vegetation also serve to shape and reflect the fractured representation of the aesthetic beauty of the wilderness images captured by Humphrey's cinematography. Narrative setting is presumably around Tiger Lookout in the Florentine Valley (where the last reported historical sighting occurred) while the actual filming locations are an aggregate of Tasmanian wilderness areas from Mt. Wellington in the South to Deloraine and the Mole Creek caves in the Central North. The Armstrong house itself is a composite setting with the background escarpment which frames the homestead "imported" technically from another location.

Nettheim recognises and represents the variety in both weather and vegetation of the Tasmanian setting. He suggests his depiction of the region differs from the majority of filmmakers who "are really attracted to the kind of dark, very closed-in forests, whereas we picked out some of those more open, button-grass plains and some of that more sparsely

wooded kind of alpine territory" (qtd. in Siemienowicz 4). While Nettheim does represent the region's topographical diversity he prefers the notorious bleakness of Tasmanian's highland weather when he needs to create atmosphere and mood in *The Hunter*. Discovering the challenges of rapidly changing climate and light, Nettheim said their filming priority was "never to shoot in sunshine" (qtd. in Siemienowicz 4). In overcast and cloudy conditions "it's a really broody, haunting and compelling landscape" (qtd. in Siemienowicz 4). Given Tasmania's cultural history and the prevailing Gothic aesthetic it is surprising, and also refreshing, that the word "Gothic" does not occur in the lengthy commentaries from either the crew or cast. Instead Nettheim suggests the chiaroscuro effects achieve "a Renaissance feel" for the images (DVD Extras). This is apparent in the film's shadows and filtered light effects as M moves through the landscape.

In the early scenes the wilderness is represented as vast, relatively colourful and benign and it is the arrival of the human invader, M, that is threatening. It is the human "shadow" (with monster potential) which creates a Gothic fracture to this naturalistic/ecological aesthetic. The powerful soundtrack elicits much of this effect in the early scenes. European compositions including Dvorak's "Ruselka," Vivaldi's *Gloira in Excelsis Deo* and 'Winter' from *The Four Seasons* inject the narrative with emotional turbulence. The score heightens dramatic tension, evokes melancholy and tranquillity and at times exuberantly celebrates the natural world. In keeping with ideas of ambivalence and Gothic tension the music can also be haunting—sometimes sad and sometimes sinister but these dark "notes" usually prefigure or accompany human exploitation.

Consistently, the human rather than the wilderness, is represented as the antagonist in *The Hunter*. In some scenes, for example, when M emerges from rainforest and onto buttongrass plains the wilderness seems hospitable. Reminiscent of the classical *locus amoenus* or "pleasant place," these scenes are replete with traditional motifs of trees, grass and water,

foundational for pastoral poets such as Theocritus and Virgil. M may be oblivious to this dimension of sensory stimuli as he strides through the open woodland, but the film audience is not. In these scenes pastoral and contemporary ecological aesthetics synthesise through melodious birdsong, waterfalls from picturesque creeks, vibrant patterns from eucalyptus bark, shady man-ferns, colourful flowering scrub, soft mosses and prickly lichens which glow in the filtered light. Unlike Leigh's detached naturalist observations (from M's clinical point of view) in the novel, the film's visual representation stimulates the senses and at times highlights the ecological diversity and visual "beauty" of the area. Even the robotic M has a breathless moment and utters "Good Lord" on first encountering the panoramic view of mountain peaks from the escarpment (in fact a view of the Western Tiers) (*The Hunter*).

As if to further reflect the mutable wilderness and to intensify the human threat Nettheim inverts this "pleasant place" ideal at times (as in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*), creating shock when it suddenly becomes the scene of violent encounters. As the narrative progresses the environment itself and the wildlife are portrayed as increasingly vulnerable. Tyburski suggests monsters can be a "chilling metaphor for the destructive natural forces our consumerist society has unleashed, and a fascinating transformation of traditional Gothic tropes to explore modern crises and fears" (151). Loggers and their activities in *The Hunter* are depicted as aggressive and destructive and their machinery, and the loggers themselves, can be read ecoGothically as monsters. Cavernous metal jaws from roaring machines strip and chip massive logs as if they were swallowing matchsticks. M adds to the invasion with clanging steel traps, piercing rifle shots and the bloody gutted corpses of wallabies and possums.

As one would anticipate numerous native animals, including cameo appearances by live devils and a wombat (in addition to those simulated by computer generated imagery (CGI)), appear in the film, usually as the hunter's victims. Snares and steel traps are illegal in Tasmania, but M has no regard for casualties whether human or nonhuman. Ethics related to this practice

are alluded to by one of the greenie characters but it is only at the end of the film's credits that the criminality of trapping and snaring is declared. There are a couple of "compensating" moments of ecojustice when M finds one of his steel traps mangled beyond repair and also when the Redleaf assassin becomes a victim of the steel jaws of a trap laid for the thylacine. Again these are example of human activity as hazardous rather than the wildlife or wilderness. Scenes of M laying and clearing his traps clearly demonstrate the indiscriminate and brutal practice and Addison has no need to write this in through dialogue. In the extras commentaries, Nettheim discusses the contentious negotiations with Tasmania's Parks and Wildlife for permission to set traps and snares for the purposes of filming. He quickly adds that "no animals were harmed in the production of *The Hunter*," and native animals in any kind of distress (or their corpses) were either simulated by CGI or "provided by a local meat supplier" (DVD Extras). Regardless of their provenance visual images of strangled and maimed "furry animals," hanging frozen or fly-blown from trees, shows the monstrous nature of this human practice.

Nettheim believes that the film "brought out the conflict between the loggers and the greenies more" [than Julia Leigh's novel] but insists that they wanted to "film both sides and not be overtly politically biased" (DVD Extras). The Armstrongs' neighbour Jack Mindy had connections with both sides while M's point-of-view was that of a dispassionate observer yet audiences claimed many powerful political interpretations (DVD Extras). The scenes of the Upper Florentine Blockade complete with resident greenies and their banners are authentic, as are some of the cast of local forestry workers. Addison claims "there was no intention of making an environmental statement. … 'We wanted the central character to walk between them, without taking a side'" (J. Wilson 2).

Despite director and screenwriter claims to resist bias aspects of the narrative are explicitly political, as in the celebration scene when the anti-logging protestors, assisted by Lucy Armstrong, win a moratorium for six months to enable a full ecological survey of the

Upper Florentine area. Constructed from an actual event the protestors' campfire celebration is disrupted by a convoy of utes and four-wheel-drive vehicles driven by the now unemployed loggers. Contemporary Gothic monsters with headlight-eyes glaring, horns shrieking and engines revving invade the peaceful evening. Intent on intimidation the forestry workers terrorise the environmentalists with threats and a targeted gunshot. Political balance is absent in this portrayal between the hostile forestry works and the gentle "tree-hugging" greenies. In accord with Kevin Corstorphine's idea of a ecoGothic vision of "progress," where the natural world is contaminated by human activity, the particular construction of this event in the film metaphorically represents anthropogenic environmental destruction globally (123). The monster convoy also exemplifies Punter's and Byron's "portents of impending disasters" who both literally and metaphorically warn of future environmental destruction and social conflict (qtd. in Tyburski 151). Forestry workers in the narrative are also vulnerable in the immediate sense of loss of livelihood and in the larger sense of local and global environmental destruction. Ironically their intimidation tactics deliver an unintended prophecy or warning of ecological disaster. This adds an interesting twist to Rigby's point that: "prophets" do "not speak from a place of purity: the prophet is both implicated in and wounded by the wrongdoing that is shown to be driving his or her world headlong into catastrophe" ("Anthropocene" 4). In a discussion of blurred boundaries between villains and victims Donna Heiland suggests it is: "through complication, through the embrace of the plural and often fractured visions" that we may find solutions (156). This instance of intimidation in *The Hunter* epitomises a divided community, yet the ethical and social complexities, ironically, are balanced by Lucy Armstrong. She defends the loggers' (villains') behaviour and claims they would never harm the

environmentalists (victims), because all their children go to school together.[48] Actual political complexities are further refracted through blurred ethical boundaries in the film's fictional narrative as protestors and "greenies" become government-employed tiger hunters.

Explicit environmental politics like these aforementioned examples also fracture a relatively dispassionate naturalistic aesthetic through the film's visual images. Nettheim manipulates Classical, Gothic, Romantic, and contemporary ecological aesthetics to represent a variety of wilderness experiences for characters and audiences. He combines this with the changing weather and "moods" of the region and achieves a range of effects from bleak Gothic to Edenic peace. These multiple perspectives serve as a global moral laboratory for increasing understanding of human relationship with wild places. Ultimately the visual effects, the themes and the narrative combine in *The Hunter* and succeed in focussing attention on this unique part of the natural world.

At times Nettheim resorts to a conventional Gothic aesthetic to build narrative tension as in the Armstrong homestead break-in. He utilises conventional Gothic elements like formidable, sublime mountain backdrops, deep shadows and haunting music to establish a threatening atmosphere, but the wilderness is not the threat. Instead it is the Redleaf agent hired to assassinate M who enters the house at night, creeps past the sleeping children and hacks M's computer. Soon after the house catches fire, Lucy and Sass perish and Bike is sent to foster

[48] Local activists and forestry workers were cast for the non-speaking roles in these scenes. Nettheim and Sheehan explain in the commentaries how it was necessary for these "extras" to share the same mini-bus and the same canteen table on the filming site. Initially there was mutual distrust between the groups but eventually some serious but mutually respectful conversation developed.

care. A police investigation claims the fire was an accident but there are lingering sinister elements implying Redleaf may have been responsible.

Gothic aspects in the visual representation of the elusive thylacine capture the tragedy of its individual death and its species extinction. When the thylacine finally appears out of the mountain mists as a kind of supernatural presence, she is neither ferocious nor threatening, but is depicted as a long-suffering and fragile creature of pathos. This sentimental fictional scene has its emotional equivalent though in the historical documentary stills on M's laptop. This archival footage of the last thylacine in captivity (which is replayed half way through the film) clearly demonstrates its agitation and distress as it paces the enclosure. The emotional effect for audiences is twofold: through knowledge of its anthropogenic extinction as well as for the plight of the individual thylacine. Its historical vulnerability is complemented by the fictional perspective and vice versa. As M strokes her dying body the CGI simulation is "transformed" into flesh, bones and fur. The bodily warmth and ebbing life of the creature is captured by a close-up shot of a very effective tactile prop in the Hobart museum collection—a genuine thylacine pelt.

The character of Jarrah (also presumed dead) provides a guiding ecological voice yet he is represented at times through Gothic tropes. Like the thylacine, Jarrah also impacts the narrative and the lives of the characters despite his physical absence. Through photographs, quotes, his favourite music, local stories and his book *Bioethics for Another Millenium* Jarrah is the disembodied voice of an ecologically ethical future. His skull (with an obvious bullet puncture) is a Gothic trope. The only material reality of his character, the skeletal remains, suggests, in the narrative context, that he was executed by sinister global biopirates. Most of the characters in *The Hunter* are represented, at least at times, in Gothic mode. At the extreme end of the negative scale are the ruthless corporate manager of Redleaf, his hired assassin and the "dehumanised" M, all of whom embody monster traits. At the other end are the lecherous

and vengeful Jack Mindy, individual aggressive loggers and self-serving greenies, the latter who appear to defect from conservation values as they join the thylacine hunt. These relatively powerless characters still embody monster elements, in terms of environmental threats, yet they are also threatened by their more powerful counterparts. Ultimately, and ironically, all perpetrators (villains) will become victims of global ecological disaster.

The film adaptation significantly alters the character of M in terms of his emotional depth and moral conscience. The film narrative represents the relationship between him and Lucy Armstrong as an evolving love story which expands to include a developing emotional attachment with her children. These previously absent family bonds are portrayed as humanising elements for M which sublimate into compassion for the vulnerable thylacine. When tragedy strikes the family M returns to the highlands channelling his grief into a revitalised hunt for the thylacine. Now he sensually adapts to the wilderness and emulates the thylacine's behaviour, living in scrub and finally waiting in a semi-dormant state in her lair. Aerial images of the winter environment, bitterly cold and snow-covered, create a Gothic foreshadow of death and a metaphor for M's personal loss.

In Leigh's novel M kills the thylacine and delivers the DNA samples to his employer. In the film, however, his killing is depicted as an act to save the creature from further persecution. He burns her body and informs RedLeaf that she is gone. This noble motivation transforms M from enemy (monster) to redeemed saviour. Consequently, the character of M has developed ethically and the conclusion for humanity is more optimistic, suggesting lessons have been learned. This ending reduces the severity of the shock delivered by the original bleak ending in Leigh's narrative and is thus potentially more popular with audiences. On the other hand, M's killing of the animal and its resulting extinction lack any attempts at humane conservation, and may reduce narrative satisfaction for some viewers.

My ecoGothic reading of *The Hunter* film shows how the Gothic aesthetic can be applied (and often inverted) to focus attention on anthropogenic harm to wilderness and its wildlife. I cast humans as contemporary ecoGothic monsters who exploit and destroy the natural world, but who also, unintentionally, warn of unfolding ecological disaster. To this end reading ecoGothic monsters as prophetic warnings of destructive human impact has unsettled, and frequently debunked, conventional negative Gothic tropes of hostile wilderness. In contrast to the primarily "Tasmanian Gothic" aesthetic adopted by Scholes for the film *Ruby Rose*, the recent film, *The Hunter*, portrays the Tasmanian wilderness through a variety of moods and competing aesthetic regimes. Ultimately, in accord with contemporary ecoGothic theory, my interpretation of the film overturns conventional Gothic depictions of a threatening Tasmanian wilderness to read anthropogenic activities as constituting the major hazard to the human/nonhuman relationship.

CONCLUSION

The impact of the "machine in the garden," which troubled Leo Marx in 1964, continues to preoccupy scientists, politicians, activists, artists and ecocritics in the twenty-first century. Buell's metaphor of a palimpsest remains appropriate as ecocritics revisit, recycle, revise and rewrite ideas and theories to increase understanding of the human/nonhuman relationship. For Thoreau the sound of a train in the woods, its piercing whistle warning all of accelerating progress, symbolised unprecedented industrial change. A discordant note ("the scream of a hawk") it may be, but rather than rejecting it as a "fracture" to the pastoral peace, Thoreau's generation welcomed the conveniences facilitated by the railroad system (*Walden*, 109). He integrated it aesthetically into his portrayals of the natural world around Concord: "I watch the passage of the morning cars with the same feeling that I do the rising of the sun, which is hardly more regular" (*Walden* 110). Yet, Thoreau is ambivalent about the impact of the railroad—on the one hand is hope, "he is elated by this wonderful invention"—but on the other hand is fear of the irreversible process of industrial and social change (Marx 252).

Ambivalence and contradiction also characterised the Romantics' attitudes to and aesthetic representations of nature, wilderness in particular. Shifts were evident in "proto-ecological writing" which began to value and represent the nonhuman world as more than merely instrumental "resource base[s] and agricultural potential" (Garrard, *Romantics*, 1–2). Poetry by Wordsworth, Keats and especially Clare (highlighted in the Introduction) anticipates a contemporary ecological aesthetic of entanglement and shared materiality, and an ethic of ecological citizenship. Throughout the textual analysis I have demonstrated how residual Romantic (and Gothic) aesthetics continue to influence, sometimes synthesising and sometimes fracturing, contemporary ecological representation of Tasmania wilderness.

Principally this thesis has argued that literary and visual representations of Tasmanian wilderness retain a fractured aesthetic from the state's colonial past, but that this is shifting to

incorporate eco-progressive interpretations of a landscape more threatened than threatening. I have developed McLean's concept of a "fractured aesthetic," into a contemporary ecological version which focuses on the representation (or absence) of degradation, resulting from exploitation of the island's natural resources. All the narratives chosen for analysis represent human impact on the nonhuman world and many of them, to add some contemporary local colour to Marx's image, represent "the bulldozer in the wilderness".

Yet, despite Tasmania's rich literary and environmental heritage there is scant, or no ecocritical scholarship on the texts chosen for analysis thus my ecocritical reading of them provides a foundation for future ecocriticism in terms of both teaching and research. I have addressed Major and McMurray's claim for the need to "reinstate the referent" by showing how the novels and films chosen acknowledge nonhuman agency but emphasise the shared materiality—the sense of kinship—which underpins ecocentrism (qtd. in Marland 859). These fictional texts, I have argued, form part of a global conversation and mythology about local and planetary-scale ecological health that have the potential to advance human/nonhuman relations, particularly with the few wild places remaining on Earth.

Recent theoretical and conceptual developments in ecocriticism, coupled with the power of the environmental imagination to evoke a sense of kinship between humans and nonhumans, have been my focus in this work. To this end I have synthesised fundamental ecocritical theories of fiction as "pleasurable" environmental advocacy with recent theories of entanglement. Many of the ideas of kinship between humans and nonhumans, expressed through the selected fictional representations, bring into relief the increasing separation in contemporary Western life, between these two groups. Imaginative aesthetics, which highlight shared corporeal elements through affective narration and thus present the nonhuman as an extension of our human selves, encourage people to care about the health of the Earth and all its inhabitants.

While apocalyptic narratives have a role to play in representing the gravity of contemporary environmental issues, particularly climate change effects and anthropogenic mass extinctions, I have argued that hope is an essential ingredient for engaging readers/audiences intellectually and affectively. Collective responses to individuals and communities, both human and nonhuman, in times of disasters like floods and bushfire, (an intrinsic part of Tasmanian's landscape history) give reason for hope. In Tasmania a growing concern for the protection of endangered species like the Tasmanian devil and the swift parrot (and their habitat) demonstrate significant ethical changes from the era of the thylacine's persecution. These more optimistic scenarios are being written into literature about the Tasmanian environment, both literally and implicitly, through fictional narratives based on retrospective learning or prophecy which allows for alternative, more eco-progressive outcomes in the actual world.

For future research Tasmania's environmental history, literature and film offer diverse stories for authors and ecocritics. Hydro and mining communities for example, some ghost towns evident only in museum exhibits and library archives, yield historical and comparative material for writing new mythologies in Iovino's sense. Such places maintain relevance for representing toxic co-dependencies and also more optimistic stories of communities that have survived by reinventing more eco-progressive identities. Moreover, the material layers of these wilderness landscapes reveal stories beyond those involving the pursuit of iron-ore, minerals and dams. Given Tasmania's Indigenous, colonial and penal settlement history there is potential, within the primary texts analysed, for postcolonial and eco-feminist ecocriticism but this has been outside the scope of my research. I have, however, begun to explore representations of the impact and the aesthetic and ethical dilemmas of ecotourism, as Tasmania's profile, as a highly desirable destination, grows globally. Kennedy's *The World Beneath* is foundational in representing this impact on Cradle Mountain National Park while

Hindrum's *Blue Cathedral* offers historical insights into the rise of Tasmania's eco-tourist potential. From the perspectives of ecotourism and also ecological citizenship Tasmania provides numerous points of interest for comparative ecocritical island studies with places like Prince Edward Island, Orkney and Ireland. A comparative ecocritical study of Tasmanian and Irish poetry, focussing on the landscape imagery of Gwen Harwood, James Charlton and Seamus Heaney is an area of research I would like to engage with.

A further challenge for ecocriticism globally is that of measuring which stories facilitate shifts in environmental thought. "Ecocriticism needs to develop tools for determining the effects of narrative strategies and structures on readers and their behaviour" (Kluwick, 513).[49] Each of the texts and their analyses in this thesis, potentially contributes to our understanding of how the intersection of aesthetics and ethics, of writing and filmmaking, encourages readers and audiences to care more, or less, about unfolding ecological disasters. Like many ecocritics I tend to be "a pessimist of the intellect but an optimist of the heart" (Rigby, "Ecocriticism" 158). It is my hope that my research will generate further ecocriticism of the texts analysed and also that it will be disseminated beyond academia to influence new creative representations of the Tasmanian wilderness and wild places generally.

[49] In the context of 'Talking about Climate Change' Ursula Kluwick calls for "an empirical reader–response theory that allows for conclusions to be drawn about the effects of environmental stories on readers" (513).

Appendix One

Discussion of scale in ecocriticism and in this thesis based on analyses of regional texts needs to position the idea of bioregionalism within the theoretical framework. From the perspective of ecology, a bioregion or ecoregion is a geographical area of similar climate where similar ecosystems and groups of species are found on similar sites. Bioregionalism, however, views a bioregion not only as a territory defined by natural markers, such as watersheds, but also as a domain of consciousness and a focus of citizenly allegiance that challenges conventional political boundaries. Bioregionalism aspires to respect and restore natural systems while satisfying basic human needs in sustainable ways, believing that geographical units of relatively small scale are likeliest to promote such engagement (Buell, Future 135).

As a system of resistance or corrective to colonisation and its concomitant displacing of native species by imported, high profit species, "Bioregionalism proposes that human societies, their modes of production and cultures should reform themselves from the bottom up, decentralising to become communities with close and sustainable relations to their local bioregions" (Clark 131). Superficially this suggests a rejection of global identity and a return to the local but this is problematic in numerous ways. It is premised on a mythic "methodological nationalism"[50] represented by cartographers' boundaries which do not reflect

[50] "Methodological nationalism" (a term taken from A.D. Smith and used by Ulrich Beck) refers to dominant modes of thought which are arguably anachronistic, especially given current environmental disasters like climate change (Clark 131). "'While reality is becoming thoroughly cosmopolitan, our habits of thought and consciousness, …, disguise the growing unreality of the world of nation-states.' That is, we often still work and think as if the territorial bounds of the nation state act as a self-evident principle of overall coherence and intelligibility

the dynamics of ecosystems or the invasive and residual effects of contaminations (Clark 131–32). Moreover, the present and predicted effects of global warming provide numerous points of economic and cultural intersection of an interplanetary scale. As Beck points out: "Globality means that from now on nothing which happens on our planet is only a limited local event; all intentions, victories and catastrophes affect the whole world, and we must reorient and reorganise our lives and actions, our organizations and institutions, along a 'local–global axis" (qtd. in Clark 132).

Heise, "one of the few ecocritics to address climate change at length in relation to literary criticism" challenges bioregionalism in her discussion of deterritorialization (Clark 136).[51] In a context of discussion about American and German environmental rhetoric Heise explains the conceptual tensions resulting from a return to the local. While she recognises the role of local affiliations and sentiments in developing awareness and concern for life-forms beyond the human she questions whether "localism is indeed a necessary component of environmental ethics" (Heise 9).

The challenge that deterritorialization poses for the environmental imagination, therefore, is to envision how ecologically based advocacy on behalf of the nonhuman world as

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within which a history and culture can be understood, ignoring anything that does not fit such a narrative." (Beck qtd. in Clark 131) (Clark 131–32).

[51] For an extended discussion on bioregionalism, primarily from an American perspective, see Lynch, Tom. Cheryll Glotfelty and Karla Armbruster, eds. *The Bioregional Imagination: Literature, Ecology and Place*. Athens, GA: U of Georgia Press, 2012. Print. *For an Australian perspective see the chapter by Ruth Blair, 'Figures of Life; Beverley Farmer's *The Seal Woman* as an Australian Bioregional Novel', pp 164–180 especially the section headed 'The Bioregional Novel'.

well as on behalf of greater socioenvironmental justice might be formulated in terms that are premised no longer primarily on ties to local places but on ties to territories and systems that are understood to encompass the planet as a whole (Heise 10).

Initially Heise seems to present this as an either/or scenario, but nurturing strong local ties does not create a situation of mutual exclusion with regard to committing to global ethics. Heise demonstrates this when she emphasises the "urgency of developing an ideal of "eco-cosmopolitanism" or environmental world citizenship. While I am not promoting bioregionalism itself I argue that representations of human relationships with local environments "nurture a Blakeian understanding of the universal through the particular" (Potter "Climate Change" 111). Initially this link is fostered through common needs of sustenance between cultures and species and the environmental imaginative can provide the aesthetic means to represent, reinforce and shape these links. It is from this perspective that I approach the analyses of my texts.

Appendix Two

Figure 4 Lake Oberon by Peter Dombrovskis (courtesy of Liz Dombrovskis)

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